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THE
DOMESTIC LIFE, CHARACTER,
AND CUSTOMS
OF THE
NATIVES OF INDIA.

BY JAMES KERR, M.A.,

LATE PRINCIPAL OF THE HINDOO COLLEGE, CALCUTTA.

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TO

CHARLES HAY CAMERON, ESQUIRE,

LATE PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL OF EDUCATION, CALCUTTA,

This Book is Dedicated,

IN TOKEN OF RESPECT FOR HIS TALENTS AND UPRIGHTNESS,

AND FOR THE INTEREST HE HAS LONG FELT,

THROUGH EVIL REPORT AND GOOD REPORT,

IN THE ELEVATION,

BY ALL PRUDENT AND SUITABLE MEANS,

OF THE NATIVES OF INDIA.

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PREFACE.

The observations now submitted to the public fall under the following heads:—

I. The Character of the Natives of India.

II. The Domestic Life and Customs of the Natives of India.

III. Indian Caste.

On these subjects the author has endeavoured to express his unprejudiced opinion, founded upon personal observation, at the same time, on all disputed points, giving due weight to the views of other writers of acknowledged authority. The following sources of information he has found particularly valuable: Buchanan's Indian Statistics; Shore's Notes on India; the early volumes of The Friend of India; the Evidence given before the Parliamentary Committees on Indian Affairs in 1853; Colebrooke's Essays; Professor H. H. Wilson's Treatises on Indian Literature;

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and Dr. J. Muir's Sanscrit Texts; not to mention other books of a more popular character.

The chief object kept in view throughout the volume is, to illustrate the Character and Customs of the Natives of India. In the observations made on their moral and intellectual character, the writer has been influenced rather by a feeling in favour of the natives than against them. Wherever he could throw light on the better traits and finer features of their character, he has not failed to do so.

It is seldom that Europeans in India have opportunities of becoming intimately acquainted with the natives of the country. There is a great gulf between us and them. It happened that peculiar circumstances brought the writer of these pages into close intimacy with a large number of intelligent natives; and of one or two of them he has ventured to give a brief biographical sketch, as a sequel to the more general view of native character which goes before.

In the observations on Indian Caste, the attentive reader will find much that differs from the views of other writers. It has been the author's object to describe this singular system as it is *in the present day*, and not, as most of our writers have viewed it, as it existed in ancient times, but of which the shadow scarcely now remains.

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The reader is requested to bear in mind that the work professes to have been written in India, where, in fact, it was planned, and where the materials were collected, although it has undergone repeated and careful revision, and has been in great part re-written since the author's return to this country.

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CHARACTER

OF

THE NATIVES OF INDIA.

CHAPTER I.

Intellectual Character—Ignorance of the People.

In India the mass of the people are very ignorant—ignorant to a degree far beyond what we meet with in Europe in the present day, and to find a parallel to which we must go back to the dark ages. There is here only a very small reading public among any class of the community. Even the priests—or, as we commonly style them, the Brahmins, who may be considered, on the whole, the most advanced class in the country—are, as a body, very ignorant. Many of them can neither read nor write. Their knowledge is confined to their immediate duties, the repetition of a few texts, or the mechanical performance of certain rites. They have no knowledge of history or of science; and, like the rest of their countrymen, they are liable to be alarmed by every shadow and every idle rumour.

In such a state of society we must expect to meet with a rank outgrowth of superstition. In point of

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fact, the minds of the people are filled with the most childish superstitions. If a bird chirps, or an insect appears in sight, or a particular animal crosses the path at an inauspicious moment, it excites the greatest alarm. An eclipse of the sun or of the moon strikes terror into the whole community. They hasten to perform their ablutions, to break their earthen pots, to blow their shells and horns, and to beat their tom-toms, as if by these means they could avert the impending disaster.*

The belief in astrology is universal. In fact astrology rises in India to the rank of a practical science. Learned pundits are called in to cast the child's nativity. The position of the stars at the moment of his birth is carefully noted down, and preserved in the horoscope for future use. Instances sometimes occur

* Superstitious notions are rife among the Hindoos. Good and bad omens alternately excite their hopes and fears. The ticking of a lizard, the sound of sneezing, the appearance of a jackal or a vulture at a particular time or place, are matters of grave interest. They are looked upon as signs and warnings, which it would be imprudent to disregard. If a lizard ticks overhead it is a bad sign; if a vulture or an owl settles on the roof of a house, it is considered unlucky, and some misfortune to the inmates may be looked for. A Sanscrit school is closed when it thunders, and when the sun or the moon is eclipsed. A wise man, says the Vishnoo Pooran, will not study the Veds "when it thunders, or at eclipses." In certain cases something depends upon the situation or direction of the object. It is considered fortunate to see a cow or a Brahmin on your right hand, or a jackal on your left. If a lizard drops on you, it is a good or a bad omen according to the part of the body on which it falls.

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in which the exact date of birth is not precisely known. The astrologer has an ingenious expedient to meet this emergency. It is assumed that the name of the child is given by direct inspiration, and indicates, in a miraculous way, the exact position of the stars when the child was born. The problem, *given the name of a child, to find the planet under which he was born,* presents no difficulties to a Hindoo mathematician.

A pious Hindoo will undertake no affair of moment without consulting the stars. In all the great events of life their guidance must be sought. In the case of marriage, for example, an auspicious day must be chosen for performing the rite. In addition to this, there must be a certain coincidence or correspondence between the horoscopes of the bride and the bridegroom, in order that the union may prove propitious. If a house is to be built, or any important business to be undertaken,. the astrologer is consulted, and his conjectures are listened to with the respect due to a revelation from Heaven. Ingenious astrological tables are printed in Hindoo almanacs, by which any person, knowing the date of his own nativity, may find out whether the year will be, on the whole, fortunate or unfortunate. Rules are also given for determining, from tables, the duration of any disease, calculating from the point of time when it commenced.

In like manner the sister art of alchemy has in the present day its dupes here, as in former times it had its dupes in Europe. The Hindoo Dousterswivel is at no loss for tricks to amuse the credulous. Some chemical

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substance is used to give the requisite golden tinge, and encourage the belief in a gradual transmutation; or some few grains of the precious metal are slipped into the crucible, to keep alive the hopes of the poor dupe who "never is, but always to be blessed."

It is the same with magic. Those among us who are best acquainted with what is passing in the depths and darker regions of Hindoo society, have frequent occasion to observe the influence which a belief in magic exercises over the minds of the people. Those who are skilled in this black art pretend to have the power, by means of spells and incantations, of casting out devils, of curing the bite of serpents, and of healing malignant diseases. The lower ranks of the people have a firm belief in these fanciful notions. They relate to one another wonderful cures effected by such means, with the same undoubting faith with which stories of ghosts and goblins were once believed among ourselves.*

It is not unusual for a Hindoo who is suffering from any misfortune, to suppose that it has been brought upon him by the ill-will of an enemy. This belief takes a form very analogous to the notions regarding witchcraft which formerly prevailed in Europe. It is commonly believed there are persons in human shape, who are possessed of a supernatural and malignant

* See Buchanan's Indian Statistics. I allude in these references to Dr. Francis Buchanan, or, as he is sometimes called, Hamilton Buchanan, a keen, if not always unprejudiced, observer of Indian manners and customs.

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power of injuring their neighbours. The belief prevails that when a witch sees a fine child she has the power, and not unfrequently the will, to deprive it of reason, or undermine its health so that it pines away and dies. Nor is this malignant influence confined in its effects to little children alone. It takes a wider range, and may sometimes afflict the whole household.*

In various ways a harvest is made out of the superstitious fears of the people. The following anecdote lately appeared in one of the native newspapers. A poor cooly, on his way to Calcutta, was accosted by two strangers who were travelling together. One of them hinted that his companion was a great saint, who possessed the power of working miracles. Among other miracles, it was said, he could turn sand into sugar, and silver into gold. Upon this the cooly prostrated himself before the saint, and craved to be permitted to see these wonders with his own eyes. The saint, nothing loth, proceeded to gratify his curiosity. The experiment was first tried of turning sand into sugar. A handful of sand was placed before the

* Sir Thomas Munro states, that in the district of Canara, where he was residing, the belief in witchcraft was universal. He says, "The cattle of the farmer seldom die a natural death. If any accident happens in any of their families when they begin to plough a field, if a snake runs across the path, or if they see a land crab, they abandon it, and say that it is in possession of the devil. It lies waste for several years." He adds that he once "had a complaint from one of the farmers that a witch had killed his wife and mother, and about twenty cows and bullocks."

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saint, who after certain manipulations succeeded in effecting the miracle. The cooly was invited to taste, and to his surprise he found it was really and truly sugar of very good quality. The saint then proceeded to perform the more important miracle of turning silver into gold. But here a difficulty arose. Neither he nor his companion happened at the moment to have any silver in his possession. What was to be done? The miracle must be put off for the present.

"No," said the cooly, "I have three rupees in silver." He forthwith produced them, and placed them at the disposal of the saint. The latter took them in his hand, went through certain forms, muttered mysterious words, and finally tied them up in the cooly's *kummerbund* or waistband, advising him at the same time on no account to look at the treasure till next morning, when he would undoubtedly find that each rupee had become a gold mohur. They then parted, and the cooly pursued his journey alone. After walking some distance meditating upon what had passed, he thought within himself, "It is probable the change has already taken place." This idea kept working in his mind, till at last his curiosity fairly got the better of him, and he untied the *kummerbund*. But what was his surprise? A change had indeed taken place! The silver was gone, and, instead of it, there remained a small quantity of dust. The gold mohurs were not there, and neither was the saint anywhere to be seen.

I am not sure that the "Curse of a Brahmin," in its original sense, inspires much terror among

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Hindoos of the present generation. This belief, like many others, seems to have fallen into the sear and yellow leaf. The curse of a Brahmin, regarded merely as the malediction of one belonging to the highest of the four castes, is, in the present day, treated with contempt. But if by Brahmin we understand a holy sage, or religious devotee, his enmity is still, in the popular mind, invested with mysterious power. I have lately received a letter from a friend, in which there is an allusion to this circumstance. It is to the following effect:—

"I do not know whether I ever told you, in any of my letters, about the Dacca mangoes. When I first went to Dacca it was about the commencement of the mango season, and one day I had a dish of most delicious-looking mangoes placed on the table. I sat down to have a feast—when, lo! to my great astonishment, every one of the mangoes, on being cut, proved to be full of grubs and large live beetles, which, on being liberated, ran briskly across the table. I turned to the consomar and said, 'How is this, that all the Dacca mangoes are full of insects?' He replied, 'Saheb, the reason that all the Dacca mangoes are full of insects is owing to the curse of a Brahmin.' 'Why, consomar, did the Brahmin curse the mangoes?' 'How do I know, saheb! Your slave cannot tell.'"

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CHAPTER II.

Intellectual Character — Intelligence — Business Talent—Influence over Europeans—Precocity.

All that I have said in the foregoing chapter I believe to be true. The natives of India, taken as a whole, are ignorant and superstitious, to a degree of which we can scarcely form any adequate conception. They are ignorant, but not stupid.

I have somewhere read that the people of India are *ignorant*, but *intelligent*. This seems exactly to describe their character. In matters of science they are as ignorant as children. I speak of the mass of the population. It is seldom they can tell their age. Their notions of distance are extremely vague. They have no correct knowledge of the dates of events.*

* One meets occasionally with some curious illustrations of their ignorance in these respects. On one occasion, when travelling in Bengal, I asked the palankeen bearers how far it was to the end of the journey, mentioning the name of the place, a village with which they were perfectly well acquainted. They replied that it was "a koss and *one pow*," a koss being equal to two English miles, and *one pow* being a fraction of a mile. This was about four o'clock in the afternoon. We travelled on and on till five o'clock came, and then six o'clock, and then

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All this, and much more than this, is true. But it is equally true that very generally throughout the country, and more particularly in the cities, there is found a quick intelligence which is quite remarkable, and which pervades all ranks and orders of men.

There is no doubt that in ancient times the Hindoos exhibited capacity of a high order. They produced works of great excellence in many branches of literature and science. Their books on mathematics, on metaphysics and logic, on grammar and poetry, their fables, their dramas, and their epic poems, have been greatly admired by the most competent judges. They exhibited the same excellence in some of the finer mechanical arts, and in some of the fine arts themselves, most certainly in sculpture and architecture, and, as some think, also in painting and music.

Nor is there any reason to think that the natives of India of our day are, in point of intellectual power, inferior to their forefathers. There has been, with change of circumstances, a decline in the exercise and development of their powers. But there has been no decline of capacity, which is still there, ready to be developed by favourable circumstances. Many of those who have had experience in the colleges and schools established by the Indian Government, are

seven o'clock, and still seemed to be no nearer the end of our journey. At last, a little after eight o'clock, the bearers came in sight of the village, and made a rush forward. We had, at last, arrived at our destination, the two miles and *one pow* having taken the bearers fully four hours to traverse, though they travelled along at a steady pace.

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ready to acknowledge that in quickness of apprehension, in retentiveness of memory, in a happy talent for learning languages, and for mastering the truths of science, Hindoo students are not a whit behind English students of the same age. Indeed, it is very generally admitted that, up to a certain age, young Hindoos are, if anything, quicker and more intelligent than Europeans. In the common concerns of life the natives of India exhibit no deficiency of intellect. In all matters of business, in everything affecting their own interest, they display great practical acuteness. As bankers and shopkeepers they are not only clear-headed, but they have the spirit of patient perseverance in a high degree. While a Hindoo lawyer—what shall I say of him, but that he is one of the subtlest of living mortals?

I do not know that in the present day there is any wider field for the display of native talent than in winning the confidence of European functionaries. The sharpest intellects of the country are directed into this channel, and have here full scope for all their activity. When a European arrives at a station in the capacity of magistrate, collector, or judge, the natives of the district, and more especially those connected with the public courts, set themselves to study his character. When they have thoroughly mastered it, when they have discovered its strong points, and its weak points, great is their reward. Possessed of this knowledge, they hold in their hands the keys of official patronage. The life and

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property of the district lie at their feet. Wielding this immense power, court is paid to them by their fellow countrymen on all sides. Whosoever wishes to gain a favour from the judge, or collector, or magistrate, must first propitiate these influential parties, who must not only be treated with deference and flattered with sweet words, but must be addressed with golden arguments too. When all this is done, when all these preliminary steps are taken, then, and not till then, the saheb may be approached with safety. No wonder that such influence is greedily sought. No wonder that all the energies and resources of the native mind are put forth to gain this enviable position.

The ascendancy, too, which is gained, must be studiously concealed from the party principally concerned. And for this purpose how much tact is required, how much talent, and even genius!

It is interesting, it is sometimes highly amusing, to observe the pains taken by natives in office to insinuate themselves into the favour of the European functionary, especially at first. They deem it prudent to worship the rising sun. They pay assiduous court to him. They write respectful letters to him, studded with flattery and sweet words. Nor is it by these arts alone they strive to win his regard. They make themselves useful by the most scrupulous attention to business. In various ways they contrive to impress the saheb's mind with the belief that they are the most trustworthy and devoted persons he can have near him,

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that with their aid everything will go on smoothly, and that they are altogether indispensable to his happiness and usefulness.

But let the saheb have a will of his own. Let him rashly attempt to introduce reforms, to correct abuses, or to circumscribe their influence in any way, they change their cue. No open opposition is attempted; but impediments are secretly thrown in the way; innumerable little springs are touched; innumerable little wheels suddenly stop. Business is brought to a standstill, and the European functionary is not long in discovering that he would have acted a wiser part if he had *let well alone*.

A friend of mine, some ten years after his arrival in India, entered upon a new office. At the head of his establishment was a very able native clerk. At first, and for a considerable time, this clerk was most attentive, most obliging, most accommodating. Whatever went wrong was immediately put right by his intervention and assiduous attention. The books and accounts were all kept in the most exact and beautiful order. Every wheel moved with the utmost regularity. For a good while not the slightest deviation could be detected from the strictest propriety. At length, when the saheb's mind was supposed to be lulled to sleep, a slight inaccuracy slipped into the accounts. A slight overcharge was made, but so slight as almost to elude detection. This went on in an increasing ratio, until it became necessary to check it. And what was the result of such interference? This able clerk, finding

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that his master kept a vigilant eye upon him, thought fit to change his tactics. He secretly threw impediments in the way. Things no longer went on so smoothly. Quarrels and misunderstandings were frequent among the servants and subordinates. Workmen could no longer be found so easily. My friend perceived that all charges incurred on his own private account increased enormously. Palankeen-bearers, shoemakers, carpenters, masons and boatmen, one and all demanded higher wages. There could be no doubt that the native clerk had a hand in it. There was a clearly defined object to be gained. The whole scheme was devised with a view to open the saheb's eyes to the fact that he might diminish his private expenses considerably, that he might save himself a world of trouble, and live in peace and comfort, provided he allowed the native clerk to have a little more of his own will. His conduct, you will observe, was founded upon cool calculation. It was founded upon a comprehensive survey of the principles of human nature, and an enlightened appreciation of his own interests.

Circumstances have here developed a type of character of a very peculiar kind. The natives of India find their country occupied by a stronger arm and stronger will than their own. All political situations of direct influence are filled by strangers. What are they to do to win back the power they have lost? They have recourse to woman's art, to cunning. The peculiarity of their position sharpens their faculties, and they

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acquire a keenness of intellect, of which Europeans have but a faint idea.

I must not be understood as saying that all native employés belong to the type here described. Far from it. Many of them are men not only of tact and discernment, but of great integrity. That the number of such may increase more and more, must be the earnest wish of every real friend of India.

Let us revert for a moment to that class of natives of whose mental capacity, as measured by their attainments in European science, we have excellent means of judging. I allude to the students in the colleges established by the Indian Government, and to those in the larger missionary seminaries.

As regards the intellectual character of Hindoo students, I venture to say that in early years, and, in many cases, so long as they remain under instruction, they are highly distinguished for capacity and intelligence. This is combined with the most tractable docility and steady application to their studies.

I think, however, it will be admitted that, speaking generally, the Hindoo intellect, so far as we have yet had opportunities of judging from the class referred to, reaches its culminating point sooner than the European, and begins sooner to decline. Up to a certain age, young Hindoos make great progress. Arrived at this point, they suddenly stop. This is true, more or less, of all the natives of India. It applies to Hindoos, Mahomedans, and Eurasians alike. Up to the age of fourteen or fifteen they are intelligent in a high degree;

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but after that age not a few of them sink into indolence, and become incapable of exertion. I have myself observed many instances of intelligent youths losing their energy and brightness all at once, to the amazement of their friends, who could not account for this sudden eclipse of their faculties.

This fact of the precocity of the native mind, of its coming early to maturity and then suddenly falling off, has given rise to much speculation among Europeans. It was the very first observation I heard made on the native character on arriving in India. The phenomenon seemed to me at that time a mystery utterly incomprehensible, and I doubted the fact. Gradually, with growing experience, I became convinced that there was some truth in it. I was disappointed to find that few of those natives who received a good education, devoted themselves in after life either to literary or scientific pursuits. A letter in the newspapers, or occasionally a light article in a local magazine, was in general the greatest literary effort they were capable of. They were not found, in any large numbers, engaged in laborious study. I never heard of one of them making experiments in chemistry or observations in astronomy, either in pursuit of truth or simply as a recreation for his leisure hours.

Granting that the opinion which is so prevalent regarding the early development and early decline of the native mind, speaking generally and without regard to bright exceptions here and there, has a real foundation in fact, to what particular cause may we suppose it to

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be owing? Is it owing to a defective system of education, or to a climate which disposes to indolence, or to the general social condition of the people, which presents almost insuperable difficulties for individuals to rise above the common level?

Some are disposed to place it to the account of climate more than to any other cause. But if this were the main cause, would not its influence be felt in early youth as in manhood, in boys as well as men?

Something seems due to the circumstance of their falling back after they leave school upon a more ignorant society, where they naturally sink to the level of those with whom they associate, and where all stimulus to improvement is lost.

It may be observed that the natives retain their quickness and shrewdness as lawyers, as bankers, and in all mercantile transactions. It may be inferred that the falling off, where it exists, may be occasioned mainly by the want of a powerful motive for exertion, and that as openings to satisfy a just ambition (I do not mean those merely in the gift of Government) arise and multiply, men will be found ready to discharge the duties with energy and ability. Indolence is most observed in those who are without the stimulus of useful employment, many of whom certainly do, to an extent that is hardly conceivable, allow their faculties to "fust in them unused."

Some think the hookah and the zenanah are to blame for the sudden pause which has often been observed in the Hindoo student as he approaches adolescence.

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There can scarcely be a doubt that these have some influence in individual cases.*

* Mr. John Marshman, a man of sound judgment and of the greatest experience, in his evidence before the parliamentary committee in 1853, gave it as his opinion, that native students rarely followed up the education they received at school. The want of a career might, he thought, have some influence. But even those who obtained situations, seldom increased their stock of knowledge in after years.

Mr. Norton, who resided many years in India, taking all the while a warm interest in the improvement of the natives, and who must be considered by all a most unprejudiced and unexceptionable witness, stated in his evidence that he had had occasion particularly to observe that the native character afforded great means of development up to a certain period of life, but after that *became stationary*. He had no doubt that if an active career were opened to the young men, it would aid materially in the development of their character. At the same time he was disposed to think that the falling off arose, in no small degree, from a defect inherent in their minds. He stated that the falling off took place about the age of one or two and twenty, which is perhaps somewhat later than most others who have had their attention turned to the fact would be disposed to assign.

It is but fair to place against these opinions that of one whose views on all Indian questions must be listened to with respect. Sir Charles Trevelyan, another witness before the same parliamentary committee, stated decidedly that he had never in India, with all his opportunities of judging, observed in Hindoo students the mental decay and falling off alluded to.

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CHAPTER III.

Moral Character — General Remarks — Misrepresentations — Some Reasons for the Diversity of Opinion that Prevails.

THE Hindoos have by some writers been painted in very dark colours. We Europeans, who pride ourselves on our truthfulness, are sometimes regardless of this virtue when speaking of the natives. Smart sayings, reflecting on their moral character, pass from mouth to mouth unexamined. Thus, you hear it said, with an air of shrewdness, that such or such a native is honest, *only because he is not clever enough to be otherwise.* Such remarks, I humbly think, are more epigrammatic than truthful.

With all respect for the Christian missionaries as a body, and for those of them especially who love truth and righteousness, I am bound to declare that some among them have shown a morbid desire to detect blemishes in the Hindoo character. Some among them are unwilling to give the Hindoos credit for the possession of any virtues at all. The Hindoos are *heathens,* a name which is supposed to comprise everything that is most antagonistic to virtue, piety, and religion. Milton allows that the fallen archangel himself had not lost "all his original brightness," and this not only

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as to his person but his moral character. May there not remain some faint traces of goodness even in a Hindoo?

One of the most severe critics of the missionary school is Ward, who never loses an opportunity of having a fling at the defects, real or imaginary, in the moral character of the Hindoos. Some of his strictures are exceedingly harsh. It has been said in his justification, that at Serampore he was brought in contact with bad specimens of the native character, and that he wrote according to his experience. This is undoubtedly true. But it does not exonerate him from the charge of being, in some respects, if not a dishonest, a prejudiced and unfair critic. Out of his own mouth he is condemned. If we look carefully at his own representations, we shall see that they sometimes refute themselves. In one place he says that a pundit of his acquaintance told him that when he went to the temple, he used to hide himself behind a pillar, *that he might not see the indecent dances, or hear the indecent songs.* If the pundit was so afraid of having his feelings shocked, why did he go there at all? In another place Ward relates the following anecdote. A certain Rajpoot had a daughter who grew up to the age of womanhood, and no one sought her in marriage. The father, alarmed lest she should remain unwed, one day deliberately *took a hatchet and cut his child in pieces.* Does not this statement contradict itself? Since the father, by Ward's own confession, acted, not from motives of cruelty, but from an impulse of tenderness

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and a sense of duty, he would naturally have recourse to the least painful means of effecting his purpose.

Ward does not quite go the length of saying that Hindoo parents have no affection for their children. He admits that the mother's affection is strong, but with a morbid desire not only to pick bad from bad, but to pick bad from good, he declares that this fondness leads them *to feed their children to excess*, and that this amiable sentiment is thus converted into "the greatest possible bane!" But if he admits that there may be some degree of attachment on the part of the parent for the child, he will scarcely admit that there is any corresponding affection on the part of the child for the parent. Now, in point of fact, Hindoos possess the virtue of filial love in a high degree. The mother in particular occupies a high place in their affection. You can put forward no stronger appeal to deter a young Hindoo from any doubtful step, than that his mother disapproves of it. I have often heard missionaries say that they have met with young Hindoos who were on the point of embracing Christianity, but who were deterred at the last moment by this overpowering argument. The entreaties and remonstrances of all other friends failed to shake their resolution, but when the mother appeared, bathed in tears, and, as has sometimes happened, threatening to take away her life, the son, overpowered and dismayed, could hold out no longer.

It may be worth while, as a set off against these severer strictures, to adduce one or two examples of a

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favourable opinion expressed of the Hindoo character by other writers of unquestionable impartiality.

Bishop Heber, who was in the best sense of the word a true missionary, draws the following amiable picture:—"The Hindoos are lively, intelligent, and interesting. The national temper is decidedly good, gentle, and kind. They are sober, industrious, and affectionate to their relations, faithful to their masters, and easily attached by kindness."

There are not wanting other writers, some of them little disposed to exaggeration, who take a most favourable view of the Hindoo character. Among these may be mentioned Sir T. Munro, a statesman of the soundest judgment. Sir John Malcolm is another Indian statesman who saw much of the Hindoos, and had the best opportunities for forming a correct opinion. It is well known that he found much that was good and beautiful in the native character.*

* I am happy to find some men distinguished in our own day for missionary zeal, who have expressed the same favourable opinion. Major Davidson, at the missionary conference held at Liverpool in 1860, said that the last ten years of his Indian life were spent among the agricultural population of India. He pitched his tent by their villages, and lived amongst them. He then, for the first time, came in contact with those who form the great bulk of the people, and the impression left on his mind by intercourse with them was *in the highest degree favourable.*

At the same conference, Colonel Edwards, while expatiating eloquently on the great work of converting the natives to Christianity, said that he shared Major Davidson's feelings of kindness for the natives of India, adding, "I say they are a

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How comes it that such opposite opinions are entertained, on a subject which might be supposed to be equally within the reach of all who have resided for any length of time in India? How comes it that the Hindoos are described by some as a mild race, as grateful, honest, and truthful; while by others, who are equally sincere, and who might be supposed to have had equally good opportunities of judging, they are described as devoid of all gratitude, truth, and honesty?

One consideration which may help us to the solution of this problem is, that, among the various races and ranks of men that compose this immense population, there exists a wide diversity of character, and that each individual observer naturally grounds his opinions upon that section of the community with which he is most familiar. The judgment formed of only one section of the community, comes to be regarded by each observer as a true representation of the national character pervading all ranks and classes.

India, as cannot too often be repeated, is a country of vast extent, and is inhabited by populations which differ very widely from each other, both physically and morally. I have no hesitation in saying that the native of northern India differs as much from the Bengalee, as the Englishman differs from the inhabitant of Naples or of Malta. It is a mistake to comprehend

people who will respond to our kindness; I say their humanity is a great humanity; I say that they have warm hearts, and can return gratitude for kindness; and that they are impressible to every kind act you like to bestow upon them."

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all Hindoos in one category. Not only are there individual differences among those that inhabit the same province, but there are also what may be called great national differences, which distinguish the inhabitants of one province from those of another. If cunning be a prominent feature in certain districts, openness and frankness are equally characteristic of others. It is the same as regards cruelty and kindness, cowardice and courage, in which respects, as in many others, there is the widest diversity among the population of this vast continent.

Even in what is geographically the same province, it is often observed that there are two classes of Hindoos. Those who inhabit the plains differ greatly from the more simple and, generally, more energetic races that inhabit the hilly districts. It may be observed also that those who dwell in the more populous districts, have a different character from the inhabitants of remote and secluded villages.*

The diversity of character between the inhabitants of distant provinces, extends beyond the domain of morals to the minuter points of external manners. It is observed that the people of the southern provinces, when speaking in an animated manner, have great volubility of utterance, and a corresponding energy of

* On one occasion Sir J. Malcolm, when travelling from Poonah to Bombay, was detained for a few days in a secluded village among the mountains. He was exceedingly struck with the marked difference, especially in artlessness and simplicity of manners, between the inhabitants of this district and those upon the high road in the open country.

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gesticulation. When two men or two women of Madras disagree, it is astonishing to see the graceful flourishes of their hands and arms. In Bengal it is much the same, though, I think, not quite so marked. On the other hand, the inhabitants of the upper provinces have more self-command, and do not give the same lively expression to their feelings.

Again, the standpoint from which we view the natives, is not always such as to give us just impressions of them. A great gulf divides us from them. We do not intermarry with them. We do not associate with them in the domestic circle, or see them in the bosom of their families. We see few but place-hunters, domestic servants, and petty shopkeepers. In these circumstances, we are not in a condition to judge correctly of the great body of the people. Some of us derive our impressions almost exclusively from the menial servants by whom we are surrounded, and not from intercourse with the more respectable classes of the community. The civil servants of the Company are particularly unfortunate. At the outset of their career, they are brought in contact with bad specimens of the community. Those with whom they have to do are persons connected with the courts of law. I do not mean merely the employés of the courts, who are a comparatively respectable class. They are brought in contact with false witnesses, with accused persons, with criminals of every grade. They thus receive their first impressions from a class of persons who cannot be regarded as fair samples of the population. I am per-

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suaded it is mainly owing to these causes that many entertain an unfavourable opinion of the natives. We must bear in mind also that this people have been long a subject race. Their character is in a great measure moulded by this circumstance. Even if there were nothing peculiar in their indigenous disposition, the fact of their having been for centuries under foreign dominion, would have some influence. It would have a tendency to repress frankness and openness. It would have a tendency to foster concealment, cunning, and other cognate vices. Those who are unable to resist in an open and manly way, are tempted, if we must not say driven, to have recourse to other means of defence. They find in cunning a weapon with which to fight every foe.

Native morality may differ from our own, and yet be less defective than we imagine. Certain features may be more prominent in Europeans, and others in natives. The latter may have less vigour of character, and some of the meaner vices may be more fully developed. At the same time the milder virtues may flourish among them, and they may be in a great measure exempt from the ruder and coarser vices. When the various elements of the character of Europeans and natives are compared, and the balance struck between them, the result may be less flattering to our self-love than we would fain imagine.

I will only make one other remark. May it not happen that some of us who severely condemn the Hindoos, are misled by early associations? We carry

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with us to India a standard of character formed on the European model. It is in a great measure an ideal standard, tinged with the illusions of youth. Any deviation from this ideal we are apt to regard as a defect. This is judging much as Baber the Turcoman did. When Baber came to India, he found nothing to his liking. Everything was different from what he had been accustomed to at home. Besides certain defects in mind and manners which he observed, he says the Hindoos have *no good horses, no good flesh, no ice or cold water!* He forgot to add that they had a fertile soil, a sunny sky, corn and oil in abundance, delicious fruits, gold, silver, and precious stones.

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CHAPTER IV.

Moral Character—Gratitude—Humanity.

Some severe judges deny to the natives the possession of any of the more humane and kindly virtues. It has been said, for example, that they are totally devoid of gratitude. Ward the missionary holds this opinion, and clenches his argument by declaring that *they have no word even to express the idea.*

The following case was lately reported in the public prints. A European was prosecuted in the Court of Requests by his native syce for wages due. It came out in evidence that the syce had been duly paid. The master, in open court, expressed his surprise at the syce's ingratitude; upon which the presiding judge is reported to have said, "You cannot, sir, have been long in India, or you would not be surprised at the ingratitude of native servants. Never expect gratitude from them. If you could feed them with diamonds, they would still be ungrateful."

I am by no means satisfied that these views afford a true representation of native character. Many Europeans who have resided in India could tell a different tale. Native servants in the families of Europeans are often very attentive to their master or mistress in times of

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sickness. There is a striking instance recorded in the Memoirs of Swartz of the affectionate gratitude of the natives, when the proper means are taken to call it forth. The aged missionary had been dangerously ill. An eye-witness, writing to the Society at home, states that when, shortly after his recovery, he went again on Christmas day to the church, "an universal joy diffused itself all over the congregation. They ran up to him; every one wanted to be the first to testify his joy and gratitude. He could scarcely make his way through the crowd." And yet it is said that the natives are destitute of gratitude!

No, they are not destitute of this heavenly spark. I have myself witnessed a scene similar to the above. Some years ago, there was taken from amongst us a man bearing a great resemblance to Swartz in simplicity of character and in love for the natives, however much beneath him in devotional feeling and religious experience. This was David Hare, a name dear to the natives of Calcutta. After realizing a considerable fortune, he retired from business, while still in the prime of life, and devoted himself, with almost unexampled zeal, to the cause of native education. In 1842 he was suddenly cut off in the midst of his usefulness. The natives loved him as a father and mourned his loss with the most sincere sorrow. I have often, since his death, seen them speak of him with tears in their eyes.

It is said that the natives have no word in their language to express the idea of gratitude. But such is

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not the case. Setting aside particular phrases which might be adduced from the Indian languages, and which are equivalent to *thank you*, have not the natives other modes of expressing their gratitude? Do they not raise their joined hands to their head, and in this way express their thanks? Besides, would not the absence of gratitude imply that the Hindoos have no sense of religion; while it is well known that, in their own way, they are perhaps the most religious people in the world.

Granting for a moment that they have no precise word in their language to denote gratitude, would it follow that the thing itself has no existence among them? We have the word *henpecked*, to denote the idea of a man kept in subjection by his wife. But we have no corresponding word to express the idea of the husband keeping the wife in subjection. Are we to infer that the thing itself does not exist? In point of fact, instances of the latter are more frequent than those of the former. The thing exists, but is without a name in our language.

There are certain customs associated in our minds with India, which have impressed many with the belief that the Hindoos are deficient in humanity. Among these the rite of suttee, or widow-burning, perhaps looms largest in the imagination of Europeans. It is impossible to think otherwise than with abhorrence of such a cruel custom. Its existence, under the sanction of religion, must be ranked among the strangest aberrations from right recorded in the book of time.

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But something may be said even here in mitigation of the sentence. I am inclined to think that in our horror of the crime, we are inclined greatly to exaggerate the frequency of its occurrence. There is no evidence that the practice of widow-burning ever extended over the whole of India, or was ever so common anywhere as some writers would lead us to believe. It appears never to have extended south of the river Kistna; and in many parts of the country where it was once practised, it appears in later times to have died a natural death and become obsolete.*

We are also too apt to regard widow-burning as a punishment inflicted by others on an unoffending victim, instead of, as in most cases it is, a voluntary martyrdom. We are apt, in our natural horror, to keep out of view the self-sacrifice, the self-denying love on the part of the wife, which leads her to devote herself, with womanly fortitude, to a voluntary death of the most painful kind.

Even if it were true that in this and some other respects the Hindoos were far more guilty than I believe them to be, I would still affirm, notwithstand-

* Dr. Francis Buchanan, in his statistical reports, repeatedly mentions that the wives among certain tribes of the districts which he visited, were formerly accustomed to burn themselves with their deceased husbands, adding, *this custom has long fallen into disuse*, or *has long gone out of fashion*. There is reason to believe that long before widow-burning was publicly abolished by the British Government, it had fallen into disuse in most parts of the country, though this is denied by those who make it a point of faith to exaggerate the errors of Hindooism.

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ing such exceptional cases, that they are a humane people. The phrase *the mild Hindoo,* is no unmeaning sound. In their ordinary treatment of their relations, they are exemplary in the highest degree. This kindness extends beyond the family circle to members of the same caste, to whom they are kind and charitable. Alms are given to the poor without distinction of caste. On great occasions you may see the halt and the maimed come trooping in from all the villages round, to receive the expected alms. Often and often I see a score or two of naked beggars, including the halt and the blind, each with a wooden dish in his hand, before a rich man's door, waiting to receive a handful of rice; and they do not wait in vain.

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CHAPTER V.

Moral Character—Veracity—Honesty.

WARD the missionary says that lying is universally practised by the Hindoos, and that he never, in the whole course of his experience, met with a single native who would hesitate to tell a falsehood if he thought he could gain anything by it. Even the amiable Swartz, whose opinions are more tempered with Christian charity, notices, in one of his letters, the sad habit the "Malabar" people have of "evading truth, and of affirming lies with the boldest countenance." A whole host of other writers might be quoted, all joining in the same chorus. One says that the natives of India have no feeling of the beauty of truth. Another says that in their disregard of truth they outstrip all the nations of the earth. Another launches against them the emphatic language of Scripture—"the ways of truth have they not known."

While it is a very general belief among Europeans that the natives of India are habitually untruthful, there are some who judge more leniently. Some men of great experience in India, and who had the very best opportunities of forming a correct opinion, have not hesitated to say that the Hindoos will bear a comparison

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in point of veracity with the people of any country under the sun.*

Not a few Europeans who have resided long in India, are ready to declare that they have met with many natives whose truthfulness, in all ordinary cases, could be fully relied upon. They are ready to declare that they have seldom, in their own experience, had any reason to doubt the word of those natives with whom they came in contact, either in the way of business or in the ordinary intercourse of society.

One of the most flagrant proofs adduced of the untruthfulness of the natives, is the perjury practised in the courts of law. I have heard a judge returning from his "cutcherry" declare that he had no satisfaction in his work, on account of the depraved character of the witnesses. There are scoundrels, it is generally believed, hanging about every court of justice in India, who live by false swearing; who are ready to hire themselves to the highest bidder, and to swear that black is white, for a few annas.†

This, which is too true, shows a dreadful state of

* I allude particularly to Shore, who expresses this opinion in his valuable notes on India. He alludes more particularly to the rural population of Northern India, where his experience chiefly lay.

† There is a story told of a European judge, who complained to a native subordinate of the perjury practised in his court. "Yes," replied the native, "it is very bad. I have never known it anywhere so bad. Here you can hire any number of witnesses to swear that black is white for four annas a head; but in my native district you cannot hire them for less than eight annas."

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things. And yet, it is less dreadful than we are apt to imagine. The perjury which is habitually practised in the courts of law, does not apply to the whole body of the people. It does not permeate every vein of native society, as we are apt to suppose. Far from it. It is confined to certain classes, to certain castes as it were, to professional sharpers who live by their wits, while the great body of the people remain free from the taint and pollution.

There can be no doubt that the natives are addicted to that particular kind of untruthfulness, if it may be called so, to which we give the name of flattery. They have great faith in the power of flattery over the human mind. I have heard a most respectable native, who wished to persuade a wealthy but parsimonious countryman to contribute handsomely in aid of a certain benevolent object, say to a friend with whom he was consulting on the subject—"Yes, he will give. He will give one thousand rupees. *I will speak sweet words to him.*"

By sweet words and smooth words, they hope to attain their object, when more direct means would fail. It is observed that some of the subordinate and dependent class of natives habitually use this flattering style in addressing their superiors. It is curious, sometimes painful, to observe how they court and flatter. They will say to their master's face—"Master very wise man. Master always do right. Master always say right." Even among the higher ranks, a young child will sometimes say—"The

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words you speak are pearls and diamonds dropping from your mouth." These are the sweet words with which they tickle the ears of those whom they wish to conciliate.

In this country the language of compliment differs greatly from our own. It is more exaggerated and high-flown. It is apt to appear to us insincere, and, so to speak, untruthful. A patron is appealed to in the words—*You are my father and mother.** A polite native addressing a superior will call him *your highness*. Inferior persons, such as our domestic servants, take a higher flight and address you as *lord of the world*. When a servant is told to do a thing, he generally replies—*Your slave*, that is, *Your slave will do it*. When addressing princes and men of exalted station, acquiescence and insincerity are carried much farther. This is well illustrated by the Eastern maxim —*If the king saith at noon-day, It is night, you are to say, Behold the moon and the stars!*

One of the most common phrases you hear from the lips of those who know a little English, is *by your favour*. If you say to a young native setting out in life, that you hope he will do well, he will reply, *by your favour*. One day a middle-aged baboo, engaged

* The same turn of expression may be observed where the form is somewhat different. When the Rajah of Tanjore desired Swartz, the missionary, to become the guardian of his son, placing the child's hand within those of Swartz, he said to him, "*This is not my son, but your son.*"

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in mercantile business in Calcutta, paid me a visit. In the course of conversation he said that his family, though now in reduced circumstances, had once been wealthy and owned much property in the city. I consoled him by saying, that by attention to business, he might perhaps in a few years raise his family to their former position of affluence. He replied—*By master's favour*, implying that it depended upon my favour; which, however, could not possibly have any influence one way or the other. This peculiar phrase is sometimes used in a still more startling manner. One day an English gentleman visited a Hindoo school, and examined the boys in geography. He asked one of them *how long the earth took to turn round its axis*. The reply was, "*By your favour*, it turns round in twenty-four hours!"

It is evident, then, from their peculiar style of politeness, and the language of compliment which they habitually employ, that the natives are apt to appear to us less sincere, less truthful, than would be the case if they possessed a blunter and more straightforward manner.

I am inclined to concur with those who think that native servants sometimes tell what appear to be lies, when they are influenced by other motives. You ask your consomar how much he gave for such an article in the bazaar. He replies, "Two rupees." You reply, "I don't think you gave more than one rupee." He replies, "Yes, I gave one rupee." Perhaps you add, "I am

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sure you did not give more than half a rupee." He adds, "Yes, I gave half a rupee." * He is afraid of contradicting you, and in a spirit of complaisance says as you say. When you see him utter all this with great composure, you set him down as an enormous liar, and are apt to think the truth is not in him. All the while he is influenced by a feeling of politeness, not unmixed with timidity, and acquiesces in what you say from a desire not to give offence.

If there are particular classes in India who are peculiarly liable to deviate from the truth, there are others equally remarkable for their truthfulness. It is said that the hereditary bards of the West of India deem it a point of honour never to break their plighted word. It is certainly true, as a general rule, of the Hindoo banker, that his word is as good as his bond. We read of particular bankers who were celebrated all over India for their unswerving veracity, such as Buckanjee, a Shroff in the Deccan, *whose word was everywhere esteemed as ready money.*†

* See Shore's Notes, where, if I recollect rightly, a similar illustration will be found.

† See Orme's History of India. Some curious instances have been observed of a regard for truth among classes where its existence would scarcely be suspected. Thus, anecdotes are told of gangs of Hindoo convicts, working on the roads with chains round their legs, sending a petition to the magistrate, stating that if he would remove their fetters, they would not take advantage of it to run away. Their petition being granted, they have kept their word, returning every night to the jail with the utmost punctuality.

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It will be useful to remember here, as elsewhere, that there is a great diversity of character among the various inhabitants of India. If in some parts of the country, and more especially among particular classes, the natives are notoriously untruthful, in other parts of the country they are distinguished for their regard for truth. The Rajpoot, in most cases, will neither tell a lie, nor brook to be called a liar. The Goorkah of Nepaul, who belongs to a Hindoo race, will bristle up if his word is called in question.

While admitting that the natives of India are, in general, less truthful than the nations of the West, some indulgent critics would attribute this defect in their character to their *lively imagination*. Others are inclined to attribute it to their *sympathy with what is vast*, and trace it to the same origin as their extravagant chronology and monstrous mythology! There may possibly be some truth in these conjectures; but it seems more natural to ascribe it directly to the debased religious ideas of the people, and partly, too, to the political state of the country.

How do the natives stand in regard to that practical truthfulness to which we give the name of honesty? The verdict is not generally favourable. Even those Europeans who are least disposed to find fault with native ways, or to pick holes in the native character, cannot shut their eyes to what comes directly under their observation. Sir T. Munro, when superintending the revenue affairs of Canara, observed that the farmers

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systematically concealed from him their real condition, and tried to make themselves appear worse off than they were. They would put on the garb of poverty, and represent themselves as without a farthing in the world. Even the Zemindars or large landed proprietors of Bengal, have sometimes been accused of having recourse to the same shifts. They sometimes affect poverty, it is alleged, as a means of concealing their wealth and of keeping what they have.

Nor are these by any means solitary examples. Particular instances of fraud, on a smaller scale, force themselves upon the notice of most European residents in India. The native upholsterer who sells chairs, tables, and other articles of household furniture, is apt to palm off upon you an inferior article. After making your purchase, you discover some flaw in the wood, which is artfully filled up with wax, and covered over with a thin coating of varnish. Palankeen carriages and buggies made entirely by native workmen, are good for nothing. The wheels are so badly put together, that after a little wear and tear they fall in pieces. To give an instance of another kind. Very recently an almanac, issued by a European publisher in Calcutta, was reprinted at a native press and sold at half price. The copy was so accurate an imitation, that the publisher himself could not distinguish it from the original.

It would be tedious to mention all the tricks one hears of. A contract is entered into for work to be done. As usual in such cases, an advance of money is

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made. After receiving the first instalment, the workmen can nowhere be found. You are perhaps going up the country with your family. You hire a boat to take you up the river. An advance of money is made to the sirdar to be distributed among the crew. A day or two after starting, the boatmen run away. The sirdar, who has connived at their flight, appears much concerned, and comes in for a share of the plunder. Native shopkeepers and boxwallahs almost invariably ask three or four times the value of their goods. This has sometimes been denied. An old writer who has left an account of the English factory at Surat, states that the natives were very "square and exact," in their dealings, and that if much less than the proper price were offered, they would turn round indignantly and say—"What! dost thou think me a Christian that I would go about to deceive thee!" Is the author speaking ironically? His description does not, most assuredly, tally with Hindoo manners in the present day. If there be anything more characteristic than another of native shopkeepers, it is their inveterate habit of asking more than the full value of their goods.

Government employment in these days is eagerly sought after, partly, there can be no doubt, on account of the facility with which official influence can be coined into money. Let a public situation, however small the nominal salary, become vacant, and there are hundreds of candidates eager to accept it. These appointments appear to be valued, not so much on account of the

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fixed salary, as for the opportunities they afford for indirect gains. Any one who is appointed to the meanest office in the police department, may consider his fortune made. He inevitably becomes rich, for he has great opportunites of turning his official influence into money. The same holds good, to some extent, of all departments of the public service. A case was lately reported in the newspapers in which a native officer, on a salary of less than fifty pounds a year, contrived, in a short time, to amass property to the value of *two thousand* pounds a year. Another case was mentioned in which a police darogah, by a skilful use of the power entrusted to him, in the course of a few years amassed a lac of rupees, or *ten thousand pounds*. Instances are known to every European in India, of native employés commencing their career on a very small salary, and gradually waxing richer and richer, till they became extensive landed proprietors. Cases even occur of persons receiving no salary, who not only contrive to live upon it, but to make a fortune out of it.

So common is it for persons in the police department to receive a gratuity, in exchange for their patronage, that they seem to be scarcely aware there is anything wrong in it. A young native friend of mine was lately appointed to one of these situations. The nominal pay was small, but the young man was satisfied. He called upon me one day after receiving his appointment. In the course of conversation, I

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happened to say to him that he would probably receive some additions to his salary in the shape of *salaamees.** He smiled, and at once admitted that it was not improbable.

It is true of India perhaps more than of any other country, that the natives live upon one another, like the fish of the sea, the greater devouring the less. This system prevails nowhere in a more aggravated form than in the police and in the courts of law. The native officers in many cases fleece all who come within their reach with insatiable avidity. No vigilance on the part of the presiding judge or magistrate can prevent it. It goes on, in unbroken succession, from officer to officer through all grades. The sheristadar, or head native officer of the judge's court, levies the heaviest contributions. The others enjoy smaller pickings, which, however, in the aggregate amount to a considerable sum.†

* This word *salaamee* is a mild phrase for a bribe. It is derived from the familiar word *salaam*, the usual salutation of respect among the natives.

† This system extends far and wide. It penetrates every vein of native society. Thus the officers of police and of the courts of law not only plunder the public, but mutually plunder one another. There lately appeared in the newspapers a series of letters addressed by a certain sheristadar of the judge's court, to his friend the darogah or sergeant of police. They were to the following effect. In the first letter the sheristadar says, "*Your friend is at the present moment in pecuniary embarrassments. He desires you to send whatever you may consider agreeable to a state of friendship and mutual good understanding.*"

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A similar system of extortion prevails extensively among our household servants. It is the custom for every servant, on his first appointment, to give a month's pay to the party who has procured the situation for him. In addition to this, there is usually in every house a head servant, on whom the master relies, and through whom he communicates his orders to the rest, and pays them their wages. This servant must be propitiated not only by the other servants, but by all of every class who have business to transact with his master. When a boxwallah, or a bookhawker, enters the premises, and effects a sale, there is a regular percentage (called *dustooree* or *custom*), amounting to about one anna in the rupee, which he hands over to this tax-gatherer. In every case where money is paid to mechanics or day-labourers through a native agent, the latter, before parting with the money, deducts the regular *dustooree*. There is reason to believe that in some cases he deducts more than the usual percentage. Not long ago I gave an order to a native carpenter for some articles of furniture. The price was agreed upon beforehand, and the money

In the second letter the sheristadar desires the darogah to send the stipulated sum (seventy-five rupees) forthwith, adding, "*Your doing this will be compassion itself.*" In the third letter the sheristadar advises the darogah that it is now the season of the Hooly Festival, which entails considerable expense. He calls upon his friend to pay the annual contribution, adding, "*Your doing so will certainly obtain for you a good name.*"—See Friend of India.

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was paid through a native baboo, from time to time, as the articles were ready. I frequently saw the carpenter (a sharp intelligent man) at this time, and he was invariably civil and obliging. When the order was fully executed, and the last instalment paid, the carpenter's manner suddenly changed. He became shy and distant. When I happened to pass him on the road, his face wore an anxious expression. This behaviour was so extraordinary, that I was at some pains to discover the cause. After a while the truth came out, that the baboo had bled the poor carpenter pretty freely. When the final settlement was made, he had deducted such exorbitant *dustooree*, that the carpenter found his profits completely swept away. Hence his melancholy woe-begone look. And yet the poor man did not openly complain, lest perchance some worse thing might befall him.

All this is done without much feeling that it is wrong. It is in a manner sanctioned by immemorial usage and by the public feeling of the country. In fact, the man who has the opportunity of feathering his nest in this way, and does not do it, is apt to be considered rather soft, and unequal to his position.

A few words may be said, if not in excuse, in extenuation of these practices. Under the native governments, presents from those who had any suit to prefer were regarded as the legitimate perquisites of office. They formed, in many cases, no inconsiderable part of an officer's income. Is it wonderful that, under

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our own administration, the old deep-rooted custom should continue to exist, and that all efforts to eradicate it prove unavailing?

Nor is this all. It is human nature, more or less, all the world over, to turn official influence into money. The better tone of feeling that prevails in European countries is of comparatively recent growth. Nor is the old system as yet wholly eradicated. Doorkeepers and policemen are still open to such influences. Even the doorkeepers of our high court of Parliament are not unwilling to receive a *douceur;* they are not insensible to this talisman, and will provide a seat for you in the gallery of the House of Lords or House of Commons all the more readily if propitiated, in the first instance, in this agreeable manner.*

India has for centuries been subject to foreign dominion. There has not been that sympathy between the governors and the governed, which is perhaps essential to the growth and full development of right principles. Such a state of matters has a tendency to foster oppression on the one side, and a spirit of concealment on the other. Falsehood and dishonesty are

* Such customs, I believe, are still more common on the Continent. A friend of mine was lately travelling in Italy. On arriving at Milan he had some difficulty about his luggage, and offered a *douceur* to one of the *gendarmes* to look after it. The latter shrugged his shoulders, as much as to say that circumstances put it out of his power to accept anything at the present time and place. Nevertheless, he looked after the luggage very attentively, and afterwards came to the hotel to receive his reward.

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the weapons with which subject races naturally try to hold their own against the stronger arm.*

We ought to consider, too, the position of the Hindoos, shut out as they are from nearly all public offices of dignity. They are thus left in a great measure uninfluenced by the higher motives of honourable ambition. And in regard to the *douceurs* usually paid to the subordinate officers of the courts, we must take into consideration the law's delay, and the uncertainty of obtaining justice by fair means. In these circumstances it is scarcely to be wondered at that *speed money* should be offered, and that the poor people should be driven to obtain justice by any means, if only they can obtain justice.

Some inconsistency may be observed in the statements of those who most bitterly arraign the Hindoos on the score of habitual falsehood and dishonesty. There are those who, while asserting in one breath that the Hindoos are wholly untruthful, in another breath declare that what most impresses natives of India with a feeling of our superiority over them, is our truth and honesty. If it be true that they are so impressed by our truth and honesty, they cannot be wholly insensible to these virtues.

I am strongly of opinion that the defect of character alluded to, and frequently charged against all the

* See Macaulay's forcible remarks on the cunning of the natives of Bengal, which he considers one of their most distinguishing characteristics.

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natives of India without a single exception, applies, in truth, in any very glaring manner, only to particular classes who are brought peculiarly under the temptation of bad influences, and that the great body of the people are in a great measure free from it. It may be observed (as was before remarked in regard to falsehood), that there are certain classes of Hindoos with whom strict honesty is a point of honour. There is a class of men to whom money, to any amount, may be entrusted with perfect safety, and who carry it from one part of the country to another without the loss of a rupee. The hereditary peons, whose duty it is to collect rents, are celebrated for their strict honesty. The up-country Durwans of Calcutta are, as a class, habitually honest and trustworthy. Even our domestic servants in all parts of India may be considered, in some points, honest in the extreme. Whatever is specially entrusted to their care, they guard with the utmost vigilance. Valuable articles lie about our houses, or in open presses, untouched; and what is still more remarkable, Europeans in India habitually sleep with the doors and windows open at night, without anything being stolen either by servants or neighbours.

It unfortunately happens that of all the natives of India, perhaps the least truthful and honest are those with whom Europeans come most in contact. The witnesses in our courts of law, not a few of the official employés, those who cluster round military cantonments

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to supply arrack to the soldiers, those who are connected with the commissariat and feed upon Government contracts, the class of boxwallahs and shopkeepers in the bazaar, some of our domestic servants, and in some instances Christian converts themselves, are to be ranked among the least truthful and least honest portion of the population. They form but a small minority of the whole people. They are the dross that floats on the surface, and much pure ore may be found apart from them, especially among the industrious rural population.

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CHAPTER VI.

Other Features of Native Character—Indolence—Apathy—Attachment to Custom.

There are some other points of character, not perhaps so important as those which have been noticed, but which still call for a few remarks.

A love of repose may be considered one of the most striking features in the character of the people of India. The Hindoos may be said to have deified this state. Their favourite notion of a supreme being is that of one who reposes in himself in a dream of absolute quiescence. This idea is, doubtless, in the first instance a reflection of their own character; but, in whatever way it originated, it tends to sanctify in their eyes a state of repose. When removed from this world of care, their highest hope is to become a part of the great Quiescent. It will naturally appear to them the best preparation for the repose of a future life, to cultivate repose in this.

It must be admitted that the Hindoos are, as compared with the energetic races of the West, an indolent people. There may, however, be observed in this, as in so many other respects, a diversity of

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character in different parts of India. In the northern provinces, and in the hilly districts and high table-lands of Central India, the inhabitants are more energetic. But in the low-lying plains of Bengal, and all along the coast, including those parts of India with which we first became acquainted, the people are inclined to be indolent. We hear of the inelastic climate of Bengal. Certainly, for the greater part of the year, this climate is the reverse of bracing, and it is with difficulty that even the European settler, with all his hereditary energy, and with his sinews strung in the bracing regions of the North, can resist the downward tendency to indolent inactivity. We need not wonder that the natives of the country, those who have been born and bred in it, should be still more inclined to sink into habits of indolence.

It is matter of common observation that our domestic servants are fond of rest. When not employed, they have a tendency to fall asleep. They will remain sitting for hours in a comatose state. Often when your bearer is pulling the punkah, you cannot tell whether he is asleep or awake. During the freshes in the river, you may see the native boats floating down the stream, carried along by the strong yet gentle current, and the boatmen sitting at their ease, the very picture of contentment, in the full enjoyment of an earthly elysium. Among native boys you do not often see the rough boisterous games of colder climes. Running, wrestling, leaping, playing at cricket, and all violent exercises, are here against the grain. Young

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Hindoos are fonder of quiet games which admit of sitting still, and require only a slight movement of the muscles.

While the natives, as a whole, are habitually indolent, still certain classes of them exhibit remarkable energy. Even in those districts where the inhabitants are most enervated by the relaxing climate, examples are to be met with of great physical endurance among particular classes. The palankeen-bearers all over India are a laborious race. They trudge along for miles under a burning sun, perspiring at every pore. The native boatmen undergo great labour and fatigue in the hottest season of the year. Seeing them rowing for hours against the stream, under a noonday sun, you would be little inclined to accuse them of indolence. At Madras, the groom, or native syce, will run behind his master's carriage at a great pace for hours together with the utmost cheerfulness. It is commonly remarked that the farmers of India are as industrious as those of Europe. In no class have I observed more industry than among the poor fishermen. They may often be seen at work early in the morning before daybreak, and again late at night. Often and often from my house on the banks of the Ganges, I hear them at all hours of the night throwing their nets into the stream, and plying their vocation with unwearied diligence. Some other classes in all parts of India, such as bankers, merchants, shopkeepers, clerks, exhibit much patient industry and quiet energy. Many of the

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native employés in the courts of law, are evermore on the alert. And why should it not be added, that no one who sees Hindoo pilgrims travelling great distances along the road, footsore and weary, with their faces directed to the holy shrine, can refuse to give them credit for energy and perseverance?

Here in Bengal, native boys, however quiet in general, are sometimes stirred to unwonted activity. I have often been both surprised and amused at seeing the singular spectacle of native urchins sliding along the soft mud that lines the river side, and sometimes lying prostrate and making great efforts to propel themselves forward as if swimming.

There are some obvious facts which lend a colour to the, I must think, exaggerated notion generally entertained of the indolence of the natives. There is no denying that the educated natives, from those who have only a smattering of English to those of higher attainments, however poor they may be, have a dislike to almost every kind of manual industry. They have a strong prejudice against all handicraft trades, looking upon them as mean and degrading. Almost the only manual employment which they take to readily, is what is here called *quill-driving*. To this occupation they have no aversion. Many of them are employed in government or mercantile offices as clerks, where they are engaged in copying letters and doing the work of accountants. But to almost every other kind of manual exertion their prejudices are strong and insurmountable, and this naturally

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leaves on our minds an impression that they are excessively indolent.

Again, our ideas of the character of the natives are founded very much upon what we observe in our domestic servants, and in those workmen, such as masons and carpenters, who are occasionally employed about the house. With regard to domestic servants, we have ourselves very much to blame for their indolence. We employ such a number of them, that there is absolutely no work for them to do. And as to native tradesmen, it is true that when we employ them they seldom get through their work quickly. But when they are working for a native master, and especially when they are under the superintendence of a sirdar, or native overseer, who knows their ways, who humours them and sends round the *hubble-bubble* among them occasionally, they exhibit more sustained energy.

As to the higher classes, who are generally seen leading a listless and inactive life, we must remember that they are almost wholly shut out from those aims and pursuits which stimulate the same classes to exertion at home. Under our Government the mercantile profession alone presents a fair field to native energy, and in this sphere the natives prove themselves eminently persevering. Some of them by dint of patient industry amass large fortunes. We may presume that, in proportion as other pursuits of an attractive kind are opened up, they will exhibit greater energy and perseverance.

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There is a mental as well as a physical indolence. The former, as well as the latter, is said to be characteristic of the Hindoos. For example, they are frequently blamed for their want of decision. It is not easy for them, it is said, to make up their minds, or to pass the line which divides profession from action. Thus, they will write and talk about the remarriage of Hindoo widows. They will bewail the sufferings of the poor widow in the most pathetic terms. There will be much sympathy expressed on the subject; but all the while no one comes forward to give effect to these fine speeches.

In like manner the natives are frequently blamed for a want of enterprise. In conversation with them, I have generally found them willing to admit this defect. I have remarked of young Hindoo students, that there were few poems they read with more enjoyment than Collins' "Camel Driver," where Hassan is described as regretting having left his native home. His regrets seemed completely in harmony with their own feelings. The lines—

> "Sad was the hour, and luckless was the day,
> When first from Shiraz' walls I bent my way,"

seemed to be an echo of their own thoughts and sentiments.

This feature of character is sometimes exhibited in still stranger shapes. The apathy of the natives on witnessing the sufferings of others has been frequently taken notice of. A boat is upset on the river, and it excites little interest. The boatmen are seen swimming for life, or

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clinging to the sides of the boat. The natives stand and talk on the bank unconcerned, and without once offering a helping hand. Other boats pass down the stream, the boatmen of which are unwilling to go an inch out of their way to render any assistance to brothers in distress. It is the same when an accident happens on shore. Travellers pass and repass without looking that way. No kind hand is stretched out to help the sufferer, no good Samaritan to bind up his wounds.

One of the most curious illustrations of Hindoo apathy, or what to us Europeans appears apathy, is exhibited in the strange reluctance of respectable natives to appear as witnesses in our courts of law. There is no denying the fact. Every one in the country, who has had any experience of the courts of justice, is fully aware of it. Generally speaking, no persuasion, no tact or diplomacy on the part of the judge, is sufficient to overcome this rooted aversion. When lately on a journey in the interior, I had some conversation with one of the English judges on this point. He mentioned that very recently a case came before him, which exhibited this feature of Hindoo character in a strong light. A highly respectable baboo of his acquaintance had his house broken into, and several valuable articles were stolen. After considerable delay, the thief was discovered, and the stolen articles found in his possession. All that was wanting to convict the criminal, was the appearance of the baboo in the witness box to give evidence. The judge urged, advised and entreated him to come forward, but all in vain. The case came on,

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but no baboo appeared—and he lost the suit. Some days after, the baboo called upon the judge, with whom he was on intimate terms, and who inquired why he had not come forward as a witness. The baboo smiled and salaamed, but would give no direct answer. The only thing quite clear was that he was content to lose the suit, rather than appear in open court as a witness.

In conversation one day with a most respectable native of the old school, I inquired if he would have any objection in a case of importance to appear as a witness in the magistrate's court. He smiled, and replied, "Thank God, I never go to magistrate's court."

What can be the cause of this strong feeling, this rooted aversion? How happens it that native gentlemen, who are in the habit of associating with Europeans, and who are intelligent and enlightened on other points, have an invincible repugnance to appear as witnesses in courts of law?

On this subject there is a wide diversity of opinion. It was long held that the objection lay to the oath which used to be administered. No respectable native, it was said, would take an oath on Ganges water, or on the Shasters, if by any means he could avoid it. It was contrary to his religion to do so. The question whether this is the real ground of objection, has been decided in a very conclusive manner. Some years ago, the Government of India passed an Act abolishing oaths in courts of law, and substituting in their stead merely a solemn declaration. What has been the effect? The

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reluctance on the part of respectable natives to appear in our courts is in no way changed. It remains as strong as ever. When summoned, they will feign sickness and use every art to obtain exemption. It is evident that the religious objection was only put forward as a plausible pretext, while the real objection was of another kind.*

The apathy, which is said to be characteristic of the Hindoos, seems to extend even to matters of science. Lyell, in his great geological work, calls attention to a phenomenon "highly deserving the attention of geologists." Some years ago a large tract of land on the west coast of India was suddenly raised by an earthquake several feet above its former level, and the event passed unheeded by the inhabitants.

It is a trite saying, that the Hindoos remain much the same at this day as when Alexander crossed the Indus, and that they will continue substantially what they are for ages to come. Custom and tradition undoubtedly exercise a great influence over them. It

* We sometimes hear the natives blamed for their apathy in refusing to give information to the police, or to give them a helping hand against disturbers of the peace. It might be worth while to inquire whether this disinclination arises from a defect in their moral character, or rather from defects in the public administration of justice. If the giving of information to the police, or lending a helping hand in cases of disturbance, is found by experience to lead to no result, or to no result except that of bringing a person into trouble ; then apathy is another name for prudence—prudence, it is true, not of a very elevated kind, but still more respectable than that heartlessness and unconcern in which it is supposed to originate.

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cannot be said of this people that they are fond of change. Any sudden innovation upon the customs of their forefathers is a thing extremely distasteful to them. Instances of this come frequently under our notice. Not long ago, a European resident in one of the towns on the banks of the Ganges was anxious to have a drain which ran past his door covered over. It was necessary to obtain the consent of his next-door neighbour, a rich Hindoo of the old school. But the baboo refused his consent. The drain, he said, was there in his father's time. This was the only argument he used. Behind this position he entrenched himself, and no sanitary considerations could drive him from it.

I have heard that *ghee* is, by some natives, prepared from boiled milk, and by others from milk that is not boiled; that certain families have for generations prepared it in the one way, and others in the other; and that if any person were to deviate from the custom of his ancestors in this respect he would incur indelible disgrace. It has become a sort of caste distinction. Such is the strong hold custom has over this strange people.

In illustration of the same habit of mind, I may mention the following story which is current in Bengal, and which, if not true, is at least well invented. It is well known that the Hindoos have a custom of carrying burdens on their heads. They bring water from the well in pitchers on their heads. In carrying away earth or rubbish, they invariably carry

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it in baskets on their heads. On one occasion a European resident hired a native cooly to remove a quantity of rubbish. To facilitate operations, he gave him a wheelbarrow, and was at some pains to teach him how to use it. The change was adopted with apparent satisfaction, and the European went away highly pleased. But what was his surprise, on returning some hours after, to see the cooly with the wheelbarrow *on his head!*

There are some obvious facts which appear at first sight to show that the natives are not so opposed to change, so stationary and unprogressive, as has been supposed. It is well known that certain classes among the natives have begun to learn English with eagerness, and that the same classes are adopting, to some extent, the European style of dress. During the Mahomedan rule, numbers of Hindoos studied Persian with the same keenness that they now do English. Such facts appear to show that the so-called immobility of the Hindoos can accommodate itself to circumstances.

But after all, these changes are confined to a small section of the population, and cannot, with any colour of truth, be said to influence the people at large. It is only those who are brought much in contact with Europeans, such as a few native gentlemen in the Presidency towns, some of the pleaders and other employés in the public courts, some of the teachers and pupils in the English schools, and some native Christians, who can be said to have adopted the European dress. And even as regards them, little

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incidents are occurring, every now and then, to show that the European costume is only worn in public, and that in private they prefer the old dress of the country. An illustration of this came under my observation a few days ago. While sitting in the verandah in the cool of the evening, a native catechist passed down the river in his boat, to visit an English missionary who resided in the neighbourhood. He was dressed in the European style, with fashionable shoes, stockings, and pantaloons. After remaining with the missionary for a few minutes, he returned to his boat, and the first thing he did was to divest himself of his European habiliments. This cost him no little trouble, especially the pantaloons, which long resisted his efforts to pull them off. He tugged and tugged, paused to take breath, and tugged again. But at last the object was accomplished; upon which he seemed to breathe more freely, and sat quietly down to smoke his *hubble-bubble.*

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CHAPTER VII.

Other Features of Native Character—Patriotism—Bravery—Fortitude.

LOVE of country, in our sense of the phrase, is a sentiment unknown to the people of India. The country which we call India, and which, as exhibited to the eye on a map, seems to be one, is divided into separate states by distance, by mountain ranges, by forests of vast extent, by sandy deserts, and by great rivers. Instead of one homogeneous people, its inhabitants are divided into a variety of distinct tribes and nations, who are united by no common tie of patriotism.

Not to speak of the Mahomedans, who form nearly a tenth part of the population, and who are separated from the other natives of India by the barrier of a distinct and intolerant religion, there are the Rajpoots, the Mahrattas, the Hindustanees, or up-country natives, the Seikhs, the Bengalees, the inhabitants of the Deccan, &c., &c., who differ from one another in several important respects. They have no common language. Their prevailing religion, though known to Europeans under the common name of Hindooism, admits of varieties as great as is to be found between the Greek,

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Roman, and Protestant Churches. The consequence of all this is that there is no common bond of union among them. Invaders sweep over the country, like wave upon wave, without meeting with any combined resistance. The Mahomedan will fight against the Hindoo, the Mahratta against the Bengalee, the Seikh against the Hindustanee, with as much animosity as the English against the French. Besides this, there are bands of mercenaries in all parts of the country whose profession is war, and who, like the *free lances* of Europe in former times, are ready to draw the sword under the banner of any chief who summons them to the field, and holds out a fair prospect of pay and plunder. These mercenaries are generally faithful to *the salt they eat.* They are faithful to the chief under whom they serve, as long as his star is in the ascendant. But let fortune turn her back, and they fall away like the leaves of autumn. And thus it has been again and again, that when an Indian chief meets with reverses, he falls, like Lucifer, "never to rise again," because there is no strong national feeling among his followers to fight and die for him.*

* Colonel Sleeman, contrary to the general and all but universal opinion, represents the Hindoos in a different light. He praises them for their public spirit, a quality which they are generally thought to possess in only a slight degree. In some parts of the country, it is true, the want of a wide national sentiment is supplied by a narrower one, similar to that which existed in Europe in feudal times. This is particularly the case among the Rajpoots, and among the inhabitants of Oude. In

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The Hindoos, speaking generally, may be considered as somewhat deficient in active courage. But in this feature of character, as in so many others, there are many distinct shades in the immense population scattered over such a wide extent of country. The Bengalees, and most of the inhabitants of Southern India, where the climate is warm and relaxing for the greater part of the year, are singularly unwarlike.*

The Hindoos submit to the powers that be with great composure. As the Duke of Wellington once said, they are "the greatest philosophers," in matters of government, that can be found in the world. They submit quietly to whoever has the upper hand, and

other instances also, the weakness of the central authority has led the people to unite in village communities, for the purposes of protection and self-government. In these cases, no doubt, we have instances of what may be called public spirit.

* I have often heard natives of Bengal admit that they were deficient in courage. Even when defending themselves on other points, they do not venture to dispute the truth of this allegation. Mrs. Colin McKenzie, in her lively and interesting book, gives an amusing example of this readiness on the part of the Bengalees to confess that they are great cowards. She was present one day at the Assembly's Mission School in Calcutta. One of the missionaries, Mr. Ewart, was examining the pupils in English history. He asked them which was best, war or peace? They all, with one voice, answered "peace." "But," said the missionary, "there might be some just wars. Suppose an enemy were to invade your country, plundering and destroying everything, would you not fight?" There was a universal shout of "*No, no!*" The missionary looked astonished, and paused for a moment. He then said, "But would you not fight for *your houses, your own families?*" "No," they said, "the Bengalees will not fight, they are all cowards."

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pursue their agricultural labours and rural occupations unconcerned within sight of contending armies.

But the want of bravery can scarcely be laid to the charge of all natives of India. Those Hindoos that join our standard as sepoys are not generally deficient in courage. The Seikhs and the Mahrattas are a comparatively warlike people.* The Rajpoots among their hills and glens cherish a warlike spirit. We cannot open a page of their history, without meeting with proofs of their heroism, not unmingled with a wild revenge.†

If the Hindoos are generally deemed deficient in active bravery, they are distinguished, on the other hand, for a more than ordinary share of passive fortitude. They bear pain with a firmness truly stoical. Such is their patience under a surgical operation, that some have imagined their nerves are less sensitive than those of Europeans. A degree of pain which would make a strong European cry out or faint away, a weak

* In single combat they can contend successfully with Europeans. Orme, in the early part of his history, describes a combat which took place between some French Hussars and the Mahratta Cavalry. He says that fighting singly, man to man, the Mahrattas were equal to any cavalry in the world; but that troops in regular order, and disciplined in the European manner, awed them.

† Incidents like the following are not unfrequently recorded of this race. A fort, defended by Rajpoots, is surrounded by the enemy. The defenders fight with undaunted courage; but, at length, the wall is surmounted. The garrison, unable any longer to resist, put their women to death, and then rush upon the enemy, sword in hand, to certain destruction.

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Bengalee will bear easily. They exhibit the same composure, the same patient resignation, when suffering from famine, plague, or any other inevitable evil.*

* One of the best illustrations of the passive fortitude and stoical indifference of the natives to personal suffering, will be found in Orme's History of India. A certain tribe of robbers had been guilty of stealing a number of horses from the English army. Two brothers of the tribe were caught and put in prison. While awaiting their sentence, one of them begged that his brother might be set at liberty in order to bring back the horses, promising that he would answer for his return *with his life.* The liberated brother did not return, and the other prepared for death with the greatest composure, affirming that he never expected him to return, and ridiculing the idea that the horses would ever be restored to the English, when they would enrich his whole tribe. Captain Clive was so charmed with the coolness with which he spoke of the fate that awaited him, that he begged of the general to pardon him.

Sir John Malcolm mentions another anecdote which also illustrates this singular feature of native character. On one occasion, when travelling to Bombay, he overtook a guard of sepoys, who were carrying a young man to execution, and entered into conversation with them. "As we were conversing," says Sir John, "we reached the spot fixed for the execution. The guard halted, and began to smoke their *hubble-bubbles*, or pipes. The prisoner's hands were untied, *and he took a pipe along with them with much apparent unconcern.*"

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CHAPTER VIII.

Other Features of Native Character—Penuriousness—Politeness.

It is sometimes alleged that the natives of India are close-fisted and penurious. Some go the length of saying that it is the universal custom for the natives never to pay even the most trifling sum until compelled to do so. The publishers of newspapers complain of the difficulty of collecting subscriptions from them. It is not the poor alone who are disinclined to pay. Baboos rolling in wealth, it is said, are as notorious in this respect as their poorer neighbours. The following anecdote, which has lately been going the round of the newspapers, illustrates this feature of native character, though united to another feeling that does credit to the person referred to. A native subscriber to the *Durpun* (a Bengalee newspaper published at Serampore) had delayed payment from month to month, until the debt amounted to forty-seven rupees. He then shifted his residence, and was lost sight of for years, and the claim was written off as irrecoverable. Some years after, the baboo's servant came to the publisher of the *Durpun*, and intimated that his master was lying ill at the sacred city of Brindabun, where it was his wish to die. But one thing troubled him. He

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remembered the debt standing against him. He was ready to pay forty rupees, on condition that the publisher would strike off seven rupees from the amount and give him a discharge in full.

It is alleged that rich natives are sometimes very exacting in demanding payment from others. Striking instances of this come under our notice, and form the subject of general conversation. There lives at the present time, not a hundred miles from Calcutta, a wealthy baboo, who has the reputation of being quite as strict towards his debtors as he is unquestionably rich. He began life on small means. From small beginnings he rose step by step, extended his business, laid house to house and field to field, until he became one of the wealthiest natives of Bengal. But in him the proverb holds good, that the love of money *goes on increasing*. This man, though rolling in wealth, has no mercy on his debtors. He never scruples, if they are in straitened circumstances, to throw them into prison and wring from them the uttermost farthing. And yet this austere man can do generous things. He has lately opened a large school for teaching the natives English, to which it is said he contributes out of his own pocket as much as 500*l.* or 600*l.* per annum.*

* The secret history of the foundation of the school rather tarnishes the lustre of the baboo's generosity. His son attended one of the numerous schools in Bengal for teaching English. The youth, one day, came unprepared with his lesson, and as a punishment was ordered to *stand on the form*. When this came to the ears of the baboo, he took it in high dudgeon, and immediately withdrew his son from a school where he was

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There is no denying that on particular occasions, and for particular objects, the native of India parts with his money freely. There is much outlay on weddings, and this not among the wealthy alone, but among all ranks. Funeral obsequies, or religious ceremonies in honour of deceased ancestors, are also occasions for indulging in the utmost extravagance of expenditure. Cases have occurred in which as much as fifty thousand pounds have been expended by a wealthy family on funeral obsequies, and I have heard of one case in which nine lacs of rupees, or ninety thousand pounds, were expended in this way. An instance has lately occurred in Calcutta, in which four *ocean gifts*, amounting in the aggregate to forty thousand rupees, were given in money to Brahmins, in addition to about four times as much expended on feeding Brahmins, and in alms to thousands of beggars, who came from all the surrounding villages.

Nor is it only in religious rites that wealthy Hindoos can be open-handed and munificent. We hear every now and then of cases in which a wealthy native digs

liable to be treated with such ignominy. Not content with this, he set up an opposition school of his own, which, as I have said, he endowed handsomely. Those unacquainted with the secret motives which are said to have prompted the endowment, hailed it as an instance of munificent liberality, springing from the purest feelings which can animate the human heart. And I will not deny that some good motives may have mingled with the bad, and that the baboo's liberality may have partly had some other foundation than wounded pride and vindictive feeling.

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a tank for the convenience of the public, or builds a serai, or plants an avenue of trees along the high road, for the shelter and convenience of travellers. Cases have occurred in which the stream of native wealth takes a still more practical direction, and is applied to the construction of roads and bridges.*

Nor is Hindoo benevolence confined to India. It can overflow to other lands. It is well known that the subscription opened in Calcutta, some years ago, for the relief of the wide-spread famine in the Highlands of Scotland, was largely increased by donations from wealthy natives of India. The students of the Hindoo College alone contributed seven hundred rupees for this purpose.

Some deny that these charitable contributions from natives flow from any pure principle of benevolence. But surely this is being too curious. Without claiming perfection for them, and exemption from every taint of human weakness, it may be allowed that there is some sprinkling of good even in the charitable acts of a Hindoo, and that to do good is one way of being good. No doubt vanity, and the desire to have a great name, may have their share in giving a spur to Hindoo benevolence. Instances of unosten-

* We may observe, from time to time, in the "Calcutta Government Gazette," the names of natives of India who have paid out money on useful public works. During the three years preceding 1840, nine lacs of rupees, or *ninety thousand pounds sterling*, were expended in this way by wealthy natives, chiefly in constructing wells, tanks, ghauts, serais, and bridges.

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tatious liberality may be rare. Benevolent acts of the most quiet and unobtrusive kind may, somehow or other, generally come to light. All this may be true. It may be conceded that the Hindoos do not, any more than others, as a rule, act upon the Christian principle of refusing to let the left hand know what the right hand doeth. But is not this true of men in all countries? Is not this high standard of Christian duty rather the ideal of what ought to be everywhere, than the living reality of what is seen anywhere?*

Let us pass on to another subject. It is universally admitted that the natives of India are, in general, polite and courteous in their behaviour. Some go the

* In no respect has the alleged parsimony of the Hindoos attracted more attention than in matters connected with the public revenue. Dr. Francis Buchanan speaks of the habits of the natives being such that "no one pays his rent, nor indeed discharges any engagement at the regular time." This is, doubtless, expressed too strongly; still, there may be some truth in it. Sir T. Munro, who was incapable of misrepresenting, or even exaggerating, anything, mentions in one of his letters, written when he was Superintendent of Revenue in Canara, that one day he was detained on the road for want of a boat to cross a river, and that immediately he was surrounded by a crowd of husbandmen, who cried out, "We have no corn, no cattle, no money. How are we to pay our rents?" This, he adds, is always their way, even when well off. We read of a Hindoo of rank, in the time of Aurungzebe, who was suspected of committing frauds on the public revenue. He was thrown into prison, with the view of compelling him to give up some part of his plunder. But, like the Jew of old, who would part with his teeth but not with his money, he held out and declared his willingness to rot in jail rather than give up what was dearer to him than life.

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length of saying that they are the most courteous people on the face of the earth. Even in the lowest ranks, down to domestic servants and day-labourers, they have an ease of manner and self-possession which we look for in vain among the rougher and more impulsive natives of the West.

The style of Hindoo politeness differs considerably from our own. It is more formal. It has not the same character of simplicity, and, so to speak, sincerity which distinguishes English manners in the present day. It is of a graver cast. The natives of India seem to consider imperturbable gravity, carried almost to the point of insensibility, as an essential element of politeness, and our manners are apt to appear to them somewhat boisterous.*

The gravity of deportment, which is characteristic of the natives of India, is not confined to the higher ranks. You may observe it in all ranks. It is a marked feature in our native domestic servants. They will stand round your table like statues, without moving a

* We read in history that one of Aurungzebe's courtiers was sent to Bombay to negotiate with the superintendents of the English settlement there, who are described as "elderly gentlemen." The ambassador, in his report to the Emperor, intimated that these elderly gentlemen, though not wanting in respect to the Emperor's representative, "sometimes laughed more heartily than became so great an occasion."

It has sometimes been thought that a settled sadness is characteristic of the natives of India. You seldom see laughing boys and girls. The voice of song is scarcely heard in the land. You may live in the country for years without once hearing the cheerful sound of whistling.

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muscle. In the midst of uproar and hilarity they appear utterly unconscious of what is passing.

Among the higher ranks of natives, young children begin to take lessons in deportment and the forms of politeness at the age of four or five years. Commencing at so early an age, they acquire the art very perfectly. They are, as it were, "to the manner born." A young Hindoo child behaves with the gravity and decorum of a judge. When he visits you with his father or elder brother, he enters the room like a little courtier, listens to the conversation, is on the look-out for questions to be addressed to him, and answers with the greatest ease and self-possession. There is no bashfulness or awkwardness in his manner.*

It would be a mistake to imagine that the gravity which is characteristic of Hindoo manners is altogether imperturbable. It sometimes breaks down, and the unnatural restraint gives place to irrepressible mirth. Sir John Malcolm in one of his letters relates the following anecdote of Scindiah, of which he was an eye-witness, when, along with several other officers, he visited the Mahratta camp in an official capacity. "The Maharajah," says Sir John, "preserved great gravity when we first went in, and probably we might

* After the capture of Seringapatam, when the two young sons of Tippoo, of the respective ages of eight and ten, were brought to the English camp, the English warriors were much struck with the gravity and propriety of their behaviour. This propriety of behaviour is not confined to young princes, but extends very generally to the sons of the middle classes, and indeed to all ranks.

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have left him without seeing that his gravity was affected, had not a ridiculous incident moved his muscles. A severe shower took place while we were in his tent. The water lodged in the flat part of the tent under which Mr. Peffer was seated, and all at once burst in a torrent upon his head. From the midst of the torrent we heard a voice exclaim *Jesus!* and soon after poor Peffer emerged. The Maharajah laughed loud, and we all joined in chorus."

Many anecdotes of a similar kind are current in India, of which the following may be given as a specimen. One evening a party of English gentlemen were assembled round a dinner table in Calcutta. In the course of the evening, a young well-bred native entered, and was invited to sit down. He preserved great gravity in the midst of the conversation, and it seemed as if nothing could make him laugh or even smile. One of the English gentlemen, who was celebrated for his sprightly humour, related his funniest stories, but all in vain. They fell flat on the ear of the young Hindoo, not a muscle of whose face moved. At length he told an anecdote of an old gentleman, who had once been extremely corpulent, but whom a severe illness had reduced considerably. One day, on getting out of bed after his recovery, this old gentleman looked down and made a remark with reference to his shrunken appearance, which, on its being repeated, fairly upset the gravity of the young Hindoo, and he laughed till the tears ran down his cheeks!

The politeness of the natives, which is certainly

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characteristic of them as a people, may be owing, it has been supposed, in some measure to their system of caste. This singular institution, founded upon a regular gradation of ranks, naturally trains the Hindoos to politeness and an attentive observance of what is due to others.*

* The following are some of the rules relating to private morals and politeness, which are laid down in the Vishnoo Pooran; in which, along with much that is trivial and puerile, there is some sound advice.

A wise man, says the Pooran, will never address another with the least unkindness. He must always speak "gently, and with truth, and never make public another's faults." He must not pass across the shadow of a venerable person, or of an idol. He must never associate with wicked persons. Half an instant is the time he should allow himself to be in their company. Further, a wise man will never engage in a dispute with either his superiors or his inferiors; controversy and marriage are to be permitted only between equals. This ancient authority lays down the following rules upon some more trivial points. "Let not a wise man, when sitting, put one foot over another, nor stretch forth his foot in the presence of a superior, but sit with modesty, in the posture called *virasama*." "He must never pass round a temple on his left hand, nor perform the ceremony of going round any venerable object in the reverse direction." "Nor is expectoration allowed at the time of eating, offering oblations, or repeating prayers, or in the presence of a respectable person." —See Wilson's Vishnoo Pooran.

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CHAPTER IX.

Character of the Natives of India—Hindoo Women—Character —Female Occupations—Female Seclusion.

I HAVE reserved for this place the very few remarks which I have to offer on the Hindoo fair sex, if that phrase may be applied to those who live under an Indian sun. And first as regards their personal appearance.

The Hindoo women we commonly see out of doors engaged in manual labour, are not remarkable for their personal charms. Their complexion is of the most sombre hue. It is of the earth, earthy. From constant exposure to the sun, it cannot be otherwise in such a climate. Their features, too, are generally coarse. Nor are these defects supplied by modest attire. Their dress is always scanty. Their bracelets, and anklets, and nose rings (ornaments of which they are passionately fond), scarcely improve their appearance. It is, however, commonly remarked that Hindoo women, even of the lowest rank, have almost always an erect and graceful carriage; which is perhaps owing to their being accustomed to carry light burdens, such as pitchers of water, on their heads.

As regards Hindoo women of the higher ranks, we seldom see them. They are mostly shut up in their

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houses in strict seclusion. We occasionally catch a glimpse of them passing in a palankeen, or sitting with their children on the flat-roofed houses of an evening, or peeping through the narrow windows which open into the street. When travelling through the country, you may sometimes, on turning a corner near a village, see one of them before you. Scared by your presence, she either disappears down the nearest lane, or instantly veils her face.

The women of this class are of fairer complexion and have more delicate features than their sisters in the lower ranks of life. Some of them would be considered attractive, judged by our own standard of beauty; especially in the northern provinces, where the complexion is comparatively fair.

Among Hindoo women of the higher ranks, the tone of morality is said to be good. The seclusion to which they are accustomed has a tendency to keep them innocent, if not virtuous. Like nuns, they are protected by stone walls from the evil of the world, if not trained to contend with its trials. Brought up as they are in strict seclusion, it would be vain to expect much vigour of character. And yet the history of India is not without examples of female heroism in times of trial and suffering.*

Though it is generally said that Hindoo ladies are,

* An instance of this kind is recorded by Elphinstone in his History of India. The story is told with many affecting details.

In some parts of the country instances occur of Hindoo women acting as soldiers. In a letter written from Hydrabad,

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as a rule, chaste and innocent, it may be observed, that Hindoo husbands are exceedingly jealous, so much so that they take it ill if any inquiries are made respecting the female members of their family, however delicately expressed or kindly meant. One is apt to imagine that there must be some reason for this jealousy, and that reason something not altogether consistent with a profound faith in female virtue. There is no denying also that we find in Hindoo books many pungent remarks levelled against the fickleness and inconstancy of females.*

As regards the morals of the inferior ranks, the verdict is not so uniformly favourable. But even among them, there is nowhere to be found much open profligacy. Even Buchanan, whose strictures on Hindoo

about the year 1817, Sir John Malcolm observes that, after walking through the extensive palace and gardens of the prime minister, he was saluted at one of the gates by a "guard of female sepoys." On inquiring if the Nizam still had any of this class of troops, the reply was, "Only five hundred, and these have lost that reputation they formerly enjoyed."—See Kaye's Life of Sir John Malcolm.

I believe that it is a fact that the Amazons of Hydrabad are employed only in guarding the harems. I do not know that their campaigns extend farther. They are, however, equipped like soldiers, in military attire and with musket and bayonet.

* Professor Wilson looks upon these remarks as harmless witticisms, and compares them to the same kind of sarcasms upon the weaker sex which are to be found in our own literature. He adds, very justly, that if we look at the character of women as portrayed in Hindoo poems and dramas, we shall find them generally described as amiable, modest, intelligent, and high-principled.

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manners are frequently severe, admits, in regard to some of the provinces which he visited, that the morals of the women were generally correct, though he is not prepared to say so much of the men.*

Hindoo women of the lower ranks, like their sisters in the West, have fluent tongues. To hear two of them scolding one another is a great treat. The words gush forth in torrents. Along with the eloquence of the tongue, there is that of gesture also. They throw themselves into the most picturesque attitudes, literally suiting the action to the word and the word to the action. Any one who has resided at Madras must be familiar with such scenes.

Native women in the middle and lower ranks of life are generally industrious, and contribute their fair share to the support of the family. They attend to various domestic duties, such as beating rice, cooking food, bringing water from the well or tank, sweeping and washing the floor. Among the labouring classes, the women often undertake work of a laborious kind, such as carrying water for families for domestic purposes, and removing earth or rubbish in baskets on their heads.†

* His remarks have more immediate reference to the province of Behar. But he excludes from his favourable verdict the women of Gya and Patna. He also places a black mark against all those women, without exception, who deal in fish.

† Sir T. Munro mentions in one of his letters from the south of India, that one day a farmer came to him lamenting bitterly the death of his wife, who *did more work for him than his best bullock*.

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After the ordinary household occupations, the spinning of cotton thread is the most common employment of the women of all classes. The instrument used for this purpose is very simple, consisting of a piece of wire with a ball of clay at the end of it. This they twirl round with one hand while they feed it with the other. They also use a machine almost exactly resembling our own small spinning wheel. In most districts, a large proportion of the women spin regularly. Even those who have to cook the meals, and look after their families, usually spin at intervals. In passing a village early in the morning, you may frequently see a light burning and hear the sound of spinning long before daybreak.*

A great deal has been written about the inferior and

* Buchanan, in his notes on the district of Dinajpore, states that the preparation of cotton thread occupies the leisure hour of the women. The farmers' wives, he says, are the greatest spinners.

What an important occupation spinning is to the females of India, appears from a statement made by Buchanan, in which he says that the value of the thread spun in one of the districts he names was not less than thirteen lacs of rupees annually. He believes that about four annas (or about sixpence of our money) a month is what each female usually earns by spinning at intervals. Some women, by carrying water for rich families and by spinning combined, earn about eight annas a month. These may seem small sums according to our ideas; but in India they go farther than with us.

To Hindoo females the art of sewing is unknown. Nor would it be of any use so long as their dress consists merely of one or two pieces of cloth wrapped loosely round the body. Knitting is another female occupation, for which there is no demand in this country.

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degraded position of woman in India. She has been described as more the slave than the partner of her husband, as walking always at a little distance behind him, as sitting apart and silent while he eats his food, afraid to lift up her eyes in his presence. There does seem to be some ground for these strictures, and such, or such like, does seem to be the Hindoo theory of the relation subsisting between the husband and the wife.*

In practice, however, the case seems never to have been so bad as is here described. If we look back at the manners of the Hindoos in the earlier ages, as set forth in Sanscrit poems, we shall find that Hindoo women in those days were treated with respect, and were on a footing of something like equality with the men. In the history of India in more recent times, there are not wanting incidents which indicate a certain

* The Hindoo law enjoins, in a peculiarly strict sense, that the wife shall reverence her husband. The Hindoo wife must not eat with her husband; she must sit at a respectful distance while her lord and master enjoys his repast. If the husband and wife are walking along the road, they must not walk side by side, but the wife at a little distance behind. In a word, according to the strict letter of the Hindoo law, the woman occupies altogether an inferior position to the man. Her evidence cannot be received in a court of justice, except against another female. Passages might be quoted from the Shasters, which fully bear out these remarks. Take the following as an example:—"Is it not the practice of women of immaculate chastity, to eat after their husbands have eaten, to sleep only after they have slept, and to rise from sleep before them?" And again, "Let a wife who wishes to perform sacred ablution, wash the feet of her lord and drink the water."

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chivalrous devotion towards the female sex on the part of their natural protectors. When so many efforts are made to draw forth to public view all the defects of the Hindoo character, and to paint it in the darkest colours, it becomes a matter of mere justice to point out those brighter tints which illuminate the picture.

If we come down to the present times and look at what is passing around us, we shall find that the condition of the Hindoo wife is more independent than might be supposed. She has often much influence over her husband. In cases not a few she disputes his authority and domineers over him. So far from the wife not daring to lift up her eyes to her husband, she often rebukes him sharply, and when a dispute arises between them she has generally the last word.*

There is an impression abroad that Hindoo women are treated very much like slaves by the men, and that all the heaviest burdens are laid on their shoulders. I do not deny that this is sometimes the case. But I do not think it is generally the rule. The only laborious employment I have seen them regularly engaged in, is carrying away earth or rubbish in baskets on their heads, when the men were employed in digging. The men do most of the outdoor work. The duties of the women in India, as among ourselves, are chiefly of a domestic nature. One of the common outdoor

* Swartz praises one of his female converts in the following terms:—"She and her husband lived together in harmony, and if at any time he spoke harshly to her she was silent, *which is not often the case with women here.*"

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occupations which we see them engaged in more than any other, is in carrying water from the wells or tanks. This they do in the Eastern fashion, with earthen jars on their heads. The labours of agriculture, including ploughing, sowing, and reaping, are, so far as I have observed, left principally to the men; and even some of those laborious duties which with us belong to the weaker sex, devolve here upon the males, such as washing clothes, and the whole process of drying, starching, and ironing them, all of which (at least for European families) are here executed by *Dhobies*, or professional washermen.

It is believed by many in England that all native women are kept within doors in strict seclusion, and that in walking through the streets of a town or travelling in the country, you meet with men only, without any sprinkling of the female sex. There is here considerable misapprehension. The seclusion of the females is confined to the higher and middle ranks alone. In the lower grades of life the women appear in public, as in other countries. How can it be otherwise? Women of this class require to work out of doors for their daily bread; and they do work in India, often very industriously.

In fact, the lower ranks of women, in all parts of India, may be seen doing domestic work, such as sweeping the floor, washing the steps of the door, bringing water from the well, and making purchases at the bazaar. They may be seen working in the fields along with the men, and carrying burdens on their heads.

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While the higher ranks of women are scarcely seen at all, and the middle class seldom, the poor and labouring classes walk about without reserve, and even with less disguise than their sisters in Europe. They may be seen at all hours in front of their doors, exposing their faces to view with great composure, or walking along the streets or the public road, carrying pitchers of water on their heads. Not unfrequently a troop of them may be seen in a state of semi-nudity, carrying basket-loads of earth. In some places numbers of women may be seen early in the morning going to the jungle to gather firewood, and returning in the evening. If you sail up the Ganges in a steamer, and arrive at a coaling station, you find a troop of females at the ghaut waiting to bring coals on board. They come on to the deck without any appearance of shyness, each carrying a basket of coals. There they may be seen naked to the waist, laughing and talking right merrily. Every one is struck with the incessant chattering which goes on among them, and which furnishes an amusing instance of this universal female talent.

Even as regards the higher and middle ranks, considerable diversity prevails in this as in so many other respects in different parts of India. The seclusion is greater in some provinces than others. It prevails with more rigour in Bengal and in Northern India than in the southern and western provinces. Throughout the Deccan, or South, it prevails only to a limited extent, and in some districts you may see the wives of the more respectable classes walking abroad quite at

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their ease. Among the Mahrattas, the women and female children of the highest ranks appear in public.*

Even in Bengal, if you are travelling through an unfrequented part of the country, you will sometimes meet women of the more respectable classes walking out of doors. As soon as they observe you, they try to get out of the way; or if this cannot be done, they will veil their faces by drawing their white cotton scarf over their heads. The women of the most respectable classes are also allowed to leave their apartments to bathe in the Ganges. They rise early for this purpose, and return home before daybreak. I have often heard their shrill voices very early in the morning, about three or four o'clock, when passing on their way to the river.

It is a disputed point whether the custom of female seclusion among the higher ranks of natives, is of ancient or comparatively modern origin. Some are of opinion that it is a Mahomedan rather than a Hindoo custom, and that its origin in India dates no farther back than the era of the Mahomedan conquest.

* Sir Charles Trevelyan, in his evidence given before the parliamentary committee in 1853, stated that Colonel Skinner used to say that when he was in Scindia's army he has seen the Madoojee's wife galloping across the country, "followed by a train of nearly a hundred females."

Elphinstone observes that it was no unusual thing for the Peshwa's consort to walk publicly to the temples, and to go through the streets in an open palankeen, attended by a retinue. He also remarks, that in purely native states the custom of female seclusion is not universal amongst the highest classes, and that *the Brahmins do not observe it at all.*

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There is much reason to think that female seclusion was, at all events, less common among the Hindoos previous to the Mahomedan conquest than it is now. It appears from Sanscrit books, that in ancient times Hindoo ladies were allowed more liberty than is usual in the present day. They were not rigidly shut out from the society of men. They were allowed to appear in public, to accompany marriage processions, to visit the temples, and to bathe in the sacred rivers. In the Ramayan it is related that when Rama and his brothers returned home with their brides, the mothers-in-law, "sumptuously clad in silk, and entertaining each other with agreeable conversation, hastened to the temples of the gods to offer incense." This shows that at that early period ladies of rank were accustomed to appear in public.

It is by no means certain that those women who are shut up in strict seclusion are dissatisfied with their lot. We are apt to imagine that they must feel like birds in a cage, longing and pining for the liberty they have lost. But they have never known the liberty for which they are said to pine. They have no experience of the diviner state. To use a Hindoo phrase, those who have been only accustomed all their life to curry and rice, have no longing for any other dainties. I have even heard it said that Hindoo women prefer being shut up, and that they consider it as a proof of their husband's affection for them. To be kept in seclusion, apart from the outer world, is associated in their minds with ideas of wealth and rank. In a

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word, it is the fashion. It is quite possible that, in these circumstances, it may be regarded rather in the light of a privilege than a punishment.

This peculiar custom among the natives of India is associated with some others of a similar character. Thus when Hindoo women of rank travel from place to place they are concealed from public view in covered conveyances. To stop these conveyances, to examine them, or even so much as peep into them, is considered a grave offence, and in native states would be punished as a crime.

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CHAPTER X.

General Remarks—Diversity of Character—Indigenous Races.

The foregoing remarks on the character of the natives of India have reference exclusively to the Hindoos, who, in truth, constitute the great bulk of the population.

In these remarks frequent allusion has been made to the number of distinct races dwelling in India. It will easily be seen that no estimate which may be formed of the character of the natives can be considered correct, that does not take into account this fact. It is in vain to invent a sweeping theory, either of praise or blame, and range the whole multitudinous population of India under it. Such a theory might apply to particular parts; but it would not apply to the various races all over India, any more than a definite theory could be framed which would take in, in its wide embrace, all the nations of Europe.*

* The word Hindoo is almost as general and comprehensive in its signification as that of European. It embraces various tribes, and what we may correctly enough call nations, which differ from one another immensely in physical, intellectual, and moral character.

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The diversity that prevails among the natives of India in point of moral and intellectual character, may be illustrated by the corresponding diversity found to exist in their physical character or personal appearance. Let me dwell for a little upon this point.

The natives of India differ remarkably in their personal appearance. The inhabitants of the low-lying districts that stretch along the sea-coast from Bengal to Bombay, are, for the most part, of slender form and dark complexion. But farther inland their appearance changes. In travelling up the country from Calcutta to the north-west, you are struck on the second or third day of your journey with the change, which becomes more marked as you travel farther north. When you arrive at Delhi or Lucknow, you find yourself among a race very much fairer and physically stronger than the inhabitants of Bengal.*

The same fact is observed if you travel south. In

* The Hindoo inhabitants of Upper India are known to Europeans by the general name of Hindustanees. They are a robust race, compared with the inhabitants of the lower provinces. Many of the Durwans or doorkeepers of Calcutta are Hindustanees, or, as they are frequently called, *Up-country men.* In physical appearance they are much superior to the Bengalees. When you see them in undress, cooking their food, many of them appear to be as robust as the inhabitants of Northern Europe.

On entering Rajpootana, the traveller finds the countenance and general appearance, as well as bearing, of the natives entirely changed. The Rajpoots are physically a fine race, besides being celebrated for their high courage, and for those qualities of veracity and integrity which are characteristic of brave men.

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going from Calcutta, in the direction of Cuttack, as soon as you enter the province of Orissa, you discover a marked change in the personal appearance of the people. Go where you will in India it is the same. At Madras, side by side with the Tamulians, you find a large sprinkling of Teloogoos, whose native district is farther north. The two races are easily distinguished from one another. They differ not only in language, but in features and physiognomy. Travelling inland, you find yourself among the Canarese, who differ from both the Tamul and the Teloogoo population. At Bombay it is much the same. The Mahrattas are distinguished from the inhabitants of Guzerat, and both from those of the neighbouring districts. In fact, if we extend our view over the whole of India, we find nearly as great a difference in personal appearance, as we find prevailing among the various inhabitants of Europe. The outward world of scenery, of hill and dale, of sun and air, of sea and sky, seem to exercise a mysterious influence on the features and expression of the face, no less than on our manners and customs.*

The Seikhs, or inhabitants of the Punjaub, may be ranked among the most energetic races of India. They are tall and athletic, and in physical appearance are little inferior to Europeans.

The Hindustanees, the Rajpoots, and the Seikhs, have all comparatively fair complexions.

* The Mahrattas are generally small of stature. Like all the inhabitants of the south, they are much darker in complexion than the natives of Northern India.

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We may gain a further insight into the diversity which prevails among the natives of India, by considering for a moment the number of languages spoken in the country.

For some time after our arrival in India, the various languages are all equally unintelligible to us, differing wholly, as they do, from the languages of the West. They appear at first to be all a jumble of the same language. But as our ears become accustomed to them, we begin to perceive a difference. We discover, for instance, that the languages commonly spoken in Bengal, Madras, and Bombay are all different from one another. Whatever affinity among them may be traced by the student of languages, they are every whit as distinct from one another as the English, French, and German languages. Those who speak them are mutually unintelligible. The native of Bengal addresses the native of Western India, and the latter stands in mute astonishment at the strange sounds. When a native of Madras and a native of Bengal meet, it is the same; they do not understand a word that is said.

To enter a little more into detail. The language of Bengal is spoken by twenty-five millions of people in the eastern provinces, but is unknown elsewhere.

The Tamulians, or, as they are commonly called, the Malabar people, who inhabit the country stretching along the coast to the north and south of Madras, are, like the Bengalees, of slender form and dark complexion. Those of them we see on first arriving at Madras (the boatmen and the catamaran men) are the most diminutive, the darkest and the least interesting portion of the population.

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Oorya, the language of the neighbouring province of Orissa, is spoken through an extent of country nearly equal to Bengal. At Midnapore, in the north, it melts into Bengalee; and at Ganjam, in the south, into Teloogoo. The Teloogoo language creeps along the coast, extending one hand to Bengalee, and another to Tamul, the latter being the language spoken in the immediate neighbourhood of Madras.

So far as regards the provinces washed by the Indian Ocean, or that tract of country that lies between Calcutta and Madras. It is the same in Western, Central, and Northern India, in all of which there are distinct languages, spoken by the inhabitants of those provinces, and by none else. Nor will all this appear surprising, if we consider that in extent of territory India is equal to the whole of Central, Southern, and Western Europe; and that it is intersected by extensive ranges of mountains as high as the Pyrenees, and forming almost insurmountable barriers to intercommunication.*

* In visiting some of the Government schools in Orissa, I have found two vernacular languages in common use. In explaining the meaning of English words, some of the scholars gave their explanations in Oorya, and others in Bengalee. In the school at Cuttack three vernacular languages were spoken. Some of the scholars spoke Hindustanee, others Oorya, and others Bengalee. Those who spoke Bengalee were the sons of persons who were employed in the public courts, and who had emigrated from Bengal. Hindustanee also, to some extent, represented a foreign element in the population.

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We are apt to imagine that India is a country of no great extent, and that it is inhabited by a people of one race and one language. Such an idea, however generally entertained, is wide—very wide—of the truth. In point of area, India is as large as the whole of central Europe. It is larger than the whole of Germany, France, Spain, Italy, and Turkey, united.

There is a diversity of character in the population, corresponding to this vast extent of country. Those who inhabit the northern provinces differ in physical appearance, in language, and in general character from those who inhabit the southern provinces, quite as much as the Russians differ from the inhabitants of Southern Italy. In like manner, the inhabitants of the east of India are a distinct people from those of the west, from whom they are separated in language, manners, and character by as wide a gulf as divides the inhabitants of Spain from those of Turkey.

It is not at all surprising that Europeans at home are scarcely aware of these facts. It is a long time before we, in India, have our eyes opened to them; and still longer before we begin to appreciate them in all their magnitude. It is only after the lapse of years that the scales fall from our eyes, and we obtain a clear idea of the diversity that prevails. We then discover not only that the population of India is divided into various castes and creeds, but that it is divided into

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various distinct nations, each having a character of its own, and all differing from one another quite as much as do the various nations of modern Europe.*

In addition to the distinct Hindoo nations—as they may without impropriety be called—that inhabit the plains of India, there are various tribes widely scattered over the hilly districts, which differ in many essential features from one another and from all the other inhabitants of the country.

The number of these hill tribes is very great. You find them in the east and west, in the north and south. You find them in Central India; you find them in the Deccan. Some of them are large tribes; others are small. Some of them are semi-civilized; others are very rude and barbarous, and live apart,

* Of this diversity, we are not, as I have said, at first fully aware. The fact only dawns upon us gradually. If on our arrival in India we happen to take up our abode in a rural district, and for years never move far from the same spot, we shall very likely remain convinced that all the inhabitants of India closely resemble those we see daily around us. If, instead of a rural district, we reside in a large city like Calcutta or Madras, we cannot shut our eyes to the fact that various races are living side by side in one city. But still it is the foreign element only of the population that strikes us by its diversity. We see Mahomedans, Parsees, Jews, and Armenians, moving about in their distinct garb, and with distinctly marked features. But all the while the great mass of the people appear to the eye to bear a close resemblance to one another, and we naturally suppose that the great bulk of the population throughout the length and breadth of India belong to the same type. This, however, is very far from being the case.

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shunning all intercourse with the inhabitants of the plains.*

* It is said that in the Neilgherry Hills alone, within a comparatively small space, there are traces of three or four distinct tribes. Judging from this limited area, with which accidental circumstances have made us familiar, we may conceive of the diversity in other parts of India.

It is remarkable that the hill tribes have no caste, nor do they worship idols. Generally speaking, the women are treated with more respect by them than by other Hindoos. So at least it is said. They are also by some considered more truthful than the polished Hindoos of the plains. They are, however, less intelligent. The phrase *jungle-wallah*, which literally means an inhabitant of the jungles, is here a common synonyme for stupidity. In some parts of India hill men are preferred for such offices as durwans, or doorkeepers, and for employment as policemen. There is a considerable diversity in the personal appearance of the different hill tribes. The Coolies of Guzerat are black, but tall and athletic. The Bheels of Malwa are black, but short. The Tudas, who inhabit certain parts of the Neilgherry Hills, are a tall athletic people with good features, their physical appearance being superior to that of any of the other hill tribes.

We cannot well draw a distinction between the hill tribes and those who inhabit the jungles or forests of India. The hill tribes are generally jungle-men, and most of the jungle-men belong to one or other of the various hill tribes. They have generally *black skins*, and are supposed to belong to the original inhabitants who were displaced by the fairer races.

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CHAPTER XI.

General Remarks—Diversity of Character—Non-indigenous Races.

The Hindoos, however much they may differ among themselves as regards language, character, and even race, may, as a whole, be regarded as one people, constituting what, with some licence of phrase, may be called the indigenous population of India. There are other elements in this vast population to which we may give the name of non-indigenous. They form no part of the aboriginal inhabitants. We know whence they came, and when they came. We know that they came into India from other countries; and the period of their advent falls distinctly within the limits of authentic history. These foreign elements in India resemble in some respects the Jews in Europe, existing as a floating society which refuses to amalgamate with the general population, and distinguished by a certain individuality of race and character, as well as by outward peculiarities of dress and a distinct form of religious worship.

Of what may be called the foreign or non-indigenous races of India, the most important, numerically, are the Mahomedans. They are supposed—as far as our imperfect knowledge of Indian statistics enables us to

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form a guess—to amount to about one-tenth of the entire population of the country. With us, they pass under the general name of Mahomedans. But though commonly classed under one name, they do not, any more than the Hindoos, belong to one homogeneous race. Some of them are originally from Persia; some of them are Pathans or Afghans; others are Moguls and draw their origin from the Tartar race.

These are all representatives of successive waves of invaders who broke into India through the north-western frontier.

In addition to these, other Mahomedans came into India by sea. Some of them settled on the western coast, while others found their way into the interior of the country. To this class belong the Arab mercenaries in the pay of some of the native princes of the south of India. Though called Arabs, few, if any of them, are immediately from Arabia.*

The Mahomedan population of India has been largely recruited from the Hindoo population. It is sufficient to look at the faces of Indian Mahomedans in the present day to perceive that many of them, if they profess the Mahomedan faith, are, in race and lineage, more Hindoos than Mahomedans.

The Mahomedans of Bengal, with an exception here

* It may be observed that the memory of these distinct ancestries is preserved amongst them with scrupulous care. Each race has a distinct title or surname by which it is distinguished from the rest. The surname of the Pathans is *Khan;* of the Moguls or Tartars, *Beg;* and of the Arabs, *Sheikh.*

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and there, can scarcely be distinguished from Hindoos, either as regards physiognomy, character or manners. Some of them, by a long series of mixed marriages, have lost almost every trace of the Persian, Afghan, Tartar or Arab physiognomy.*

Again, in many parts of India, a considerable number of Hindoos have, from time to time, embraced the Mahomedan faith. These Hindoo converts are usually styled Mahomedans, although there be not a drop of Mahomedan blood in their veins.

The Mahomedan population of India in the present day, seems to be mainly composed of the last two classes. It seems certain that by far the greater number of Indian Mahomedans, are only Mahomedans in name. In point of lineage, they are either pure Hindoos who have espoused the Mahomedan faith, or a mixed race, the offspring of intermarriages between Mahomedans and Hindoos. This is borne out by facts that stare every one in the face, though our attention is not apt to be drawn to them until we have resided several years in India. Among the Mussulmen of Bengal the Mahomedan features have been almost wholly effaced. In very many cases, every lineament of the face is strictly of the Hindoo type. It is much the same in other parts of India, where, not to speak of the converts from Hindooism, there have been for ages, even in the highest ranks,

* Even their language, in common discourse, approximates closely to that of the Hindoos, and they speak what has been called a Mussulman Bengalee.

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numerous intermarriages between Mahomedans and Hindoos.

I have seen it stated that the largest proportion of Mahomedans to Hindoos, is found in the districts to the east of Bengal. The proportion there is said to be larger even than in the vicinity of Agra and Delhi. This can only be accounted for on the supposition that many converts were made in these provinces from the Hindoo population, and that those who go by the name of Mahomedans are Mahomedans in religion, but Hindoos in race.*

It may be observed that the Mahomedans of India,

* Our earliest travellers in India describe the Court of the Great Mogul as no longer consisting of true Moguls, but a mixture of all sorts of strangers; including Usbecs, Persians, Arabians, Turks, or their children. Bernier, describing Shah Jehan's Court in 1655, states that those employed in public offices, and even in the army, were not all of the race of Moguls. " but strangers and nations gathered out of all countries; most of them Persians, some Arabians, and some Turks." He adds that, in order to be esteemed a Mogul, it is enough to be "a stranger, white of face, and a Mahometan.".

Travellers in those times mention that the princes, the sons of Aurungzebe, though Mahomedans, married the daughters of the "Heathen," by which name is meant Hindoos. It thus appears that even in the highest ranks, Mahomedans at that period intermarried with Hindoos.

Bernier, speaking of the Moguls, and all who went under that name, whether real "Usbecs," or Persians, Arabians, or Turks, who had emigrated from their respective countries into India, states that the children of the third or fourth generation, "and that have taken the brown colour and soft humour" of the country, were not so much esteemed, nor were they so commonly raised to public offices, as the new comers.

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at least some of them, particularly, if I mistake not, in the higher ranks of life, differ essentially in manners and character from the Hindoos. Smoothness and mildness are very characteristic of the latter. The followers of Islam are rougher in their manners, more independent and outspoken. At one period I was very much struck with this. After having for years mixed only with Hindoos, without becoming acquainted with a single Mahomedan above the rank of a menial servant, when circumstances subsequently placed me in close contact with a number of respectable and well educated Mahomedans, I was at once struck with the change. In the case of the Hindoo, speaking generally, it was scarcely possible to get at his real sentiments on any subject. He seemed afraid of committing himself, spoke with bated breath, and gave utterance to no opinion which was likely to jar upon your ear. It was different with the Mahomedans. They spoke louder, and gave a much freer expression to their opinions. The change was very agreeable; for, however pleasing the smoothness and invariable courtesy of the Hindoos may be at first, one gets tired of it.

In all the presidency towns, but more particularly on the western coast, and at Dacca, Chittagong, and Arracan, in the east of India, there is a sprinkling of what are called Portuguese inhabitants. Their number altogether has been estimated at about a million. They affect the European style of dress and manners, and profess, for the most part, the Roman Catholic faith.

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Their name, their European dress, and their religion, are apt to mislead us into the belief that more European blood flows in their veins than is really the case. Few or none of them are pure Portuguese—that is, unmixed descendants of the Portuguese of Europe. A portion of them are a mixed race, the offspring of intermarriages between the early Portuguese settlers and native women. Some of those who are now known by the name of Portuguese are really descended from the early navigators, who, under Vasco de Gama and his successors, visited India. Few traces, however, of this descent can be observed in their physiognomy. The Portuguese features have been almost completely worn out by successive intermarriages with the Hindoos, and there can be no doubt that, at the present time, the Hindoo element greatly preponderates. But by far the largest proportion of those who call themselves Portuguese are really baptized Hindoos, who have not a drop of Portuguese blood in their veins. This may account for the fact that in complexion they rival the darkest of the native races, and in physical strength are no way superior to them.*

Socially, the native Portuguese are in a degraded state. There are a few wealthy men among them; but the great majority are poor, and on a level with the working classes among the Hindoos.

* The Indo-Portuguese, with some exceptions, are rather smaller and feebler than the common race of natives; and the European dress which they affect, makes them look even more diminutive than they are.

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A good many of the Portuguese in Calcutta are employed as clerks in the government and mercantile offices. Others are employed as bell-ringers in Christian churches, and as mutes at funerals. Some of them are employed as servants in the houses of Europeans, particularly as cooks. At one time they seem to have been employed as soldiers, but this is not now the case.*

In some localities, where only a few families of Portuguese reside in the midst of thousands of Hindoos, they have almost completely sunk back into the native

* These native Portuguese soldiers (or native Christians calling themselves Portuguese) were usually designated *Topasses*, the name being variously spelt. Fryer speaks of the *Topazers*, or "Portugal Firemen." Anderson, in his "English in Western India," observes that in some of the early European regiments there was a mixture of natives called *Topasses*. The name, he says, has given rise to various conjectures. He quotes from a Dutch author, who gives the following explanation :—"*Topassers* —accommodators; because they will accommodate themselves easily to the manners, customs, and religion of such as they live among." Some derive the name from a stone called *Topaz*. These conjectures appear improbable. Is it not more likely that the name is derived from *Topee*, which signifies a "hat"? The phrase, "Topee-wallah," by which Europeans are generally designated in India, is well known. It means a "hatman," that is, the wearer of a hat. The Indo-Portuguese are very particular in wearing the hat; and preserve most religiously this badge of their alliance with Europeans when almost every other is gone. This derivation was evidently that which recommended itself to Orme the historian, who says, "From wearing a hat, these pretended Portuguese obtained, amongst the natives of India, the name of *Topasses*, by which name the Europeans also distinguish them."

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population. Buchanan, in his Indian Statistics, states that at one place in the eastern districts of Bengal he found twenty families of native Portuguese. They were called *Choldar*, which he supposed was a corruption of *soldier*. They had entirely adopted the native dress. The only European custom that they retained was that the women courtesied, and the men bowed, when they saluted a stranger; and the latter, he adds, "would take off their hats, were they provided with such an article of luxury." In saluting strangers, they usually made a motion with their hand towards their head.

A dialect of the Portuguese language was at one time used as the general medium of communication between Europeans and natives. Swartz, in one of his letters, speaks of the Portuguese tongue, "that dialect of it which is used by the Portuguese who are natives of India." European missionaries used formerly to study this Portuguese dialect, in order to enable them to preach to the native Portuguese.*

The very dark complexion of most of the native Portuguese (in most cases black as ebony) excites the

* Captain Alexander Hamilton says, "I could not find one in ten thousand that could speak intelligible English; though, along the sea-coasts, the Portuguese have left a vestige of their language; though much corrupted, yet it is the language that most Europeans learn first, to qualify them for a general converse with one another, as well as with the different inhabitants of India."

Mr. Marshman, in his "Life and Times of Carey," &c., states that, in 1759, Kiernander opened divine service in Calcutta in the Portuguese language. He adds,—"This language came in with

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wonder of all Europeans on their first arrival in India. We cease to wonder when we learn that so many of them are, as regards race, genuine Hindoos, the descendants, for the most part, of early native converts to the Roman Catholic Church. These converts, as is well known, belonged mostly to the class of poor natives along the sea-coast, who, from constant exposure to the sun and weather, contracted a darker complexion than other Hindoos.

If the native Portuguese could be considered as the pure descendants of the early Portuguese settlers, they must be regarded as a very degenerate race. But, as I have said, there is every reason to believe that the greater part of them are only baptized Hindoos. Some few, perhaps, may justly claim to be lineally descended from the followers of Vasco de Gama, and others from the roving sailors who roamed over the eastern seas, and took up a temporary abode at such places as Bala-

the Portuguese power two centuries and a half before, and survived its extinction. It was the lingua franca of all the foreign settlements round the Bay of Bengal, and was the ordinary medium of communication between Europeans and their domestics. Even in Calcutta it was more commonly used by the servants of the Company than any other language. The charter, granted at the beginning of the eighteenth century, provided that they should maintain a chaplain at each of their garrisons and superior factories; and that he should be obliged to acquire the Portuguese language within a twelvemonth. Clive spoke Portuguese well. The use of this language is now extinct in Bengal; so much so that the descendants of the Portuguese now speak Bengalee from their cradle. Down to 1828, the Governor of Serampore received the daily report of his little garrison in Portuguese."

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sore, Dacca and the coast of Arracan. But even in these cases, the European features have been completely obliterated by successive intermarriages with Hindoos.

There is another element in the non-indigenous population, bearing some resemblance to the Portuguese, though generally of fairer complexion. I mean those who are known by the name of Eurasians, or more commonly *East Indians.** This class is met with in considerable numbers in the presidency towns, and at some of the larger stations in the interior. They are the offspring of intermarriages between the Anglo-Saxon race and the natives of the country. In some places, such as Calcutta and Madras, they form a distinct and considerable element of the population. They profess, for the most part, the Protestant form of the Christian religion, and may be seen attending church on Sundays with the greatest regularity and decorum. They are in fact Christians from their youth. Some of them have received a very good education, and are scarcely distinguishable in any respect from Europeans. I have met with individuals among them who were qualified, in point of education and refinement of manners, to associate on a footing of equality with the best educated Europeans.

The East Indians are good penmen, and many of them are employed as such in the public offices. It is

* The name of *East Indian* is also applied to the descendants of Europeans on both the father's and mother's side, who are born in India. These, however, are a distinct class from the Eurasians.

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even brought as a charge against them that they are too fond of "quill-driving," and that they shrink from other trades and professions, which afford equal opportunities of rising in the world, but which in their eyes are not quite so genteel. Some Europeans regard this class with great interest, looking upon them as a connecting link between the European and native communities, and as destined eventually to exercise an important influence upon the latter, in educating them and bringing them over to Christianity.*

* There is a sprinkling of other non-indigenous races in India, which have not been alluded to in the foregoing remarks.

The Parsees.—After the Mahomedans, perhaps the most important non-indigenous race in India are the Parsees. They are originally from Persia, from which country their forefathers emigrated several centuries ago, fleeing from the sword of Islam. They remain, like the Jews, a separate people, strongly attached to their own peculiar customs, and steadily refusing to intermarry with either Hindoos or Mahomedans. There is no appearance among them, as far as I have observed, of any intermixture of race. Those we meet with in Eastern India still retain, in form and feature, a marked resemblance to their Persian ancestors. They are of a comparatively fair complexion, with a profile generally aquiline. Their demeanour is grave and respectful. The chief peculiarity in their dress which strikes the eye of a stranger, and at once distinguishes them from other natives, is their high glazed hat. It is quite unlike the turban, and bears a nearer resemblance to the European hat, rising high above the head, and swelling out in a peculiar manner towards the top.

The Parsees are most numerous at Bombay. There is there a considerable colony of them, mostly engaged in mercantile pursuits. There are a few families settled in Calcutta. I do not remember having seen a single Parsee at Madras.

This people, as is well known, is one of the most energetic to

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be found in the East. As far as regards mercantile enterprise they stand in the front rank among the various races of India. You may sometimes see, lying in the Hooghly, a ship commanded by a Parsee captain, and manned by Parsee sailors. They also excel in the minuter arts of embroidery and wood carving. They are equally distinguished for their intelligence and integrity.

Armenians.—A few Armenians may be found scattered over India. Like the Parsees, they are chiefly engaged in commercial pursuits. At the present time a number of Armenian families are found at each of the presidency towns, and also at a few stations in the interior of the country. At one time there was a considerable Armenian community at Dacca, which has declined in wealth and importance with the decline of the manufacturing prosperity of that city.

The Armenians in India dress very much like Europeans. Wherever they are planted in considerable numbers, there may be seen an Armenian church. Their priests come from Persia. Both at Calcutta and Madras there is an Armenian church, and the same at Dacca and Chinsurah. In some places, as at Calcutta, they have also an academy, supported by their own body, for the education of their children in the Armenian language, and in English.

Jews.—As an element of the population of India, some notice should be taken of the Jewish settlers. They are chiefly found on the western side of the continent, but they are also met with as far east as Calcutta; and, true to their instincts, they are chiefly engaged in mercantile pursuits.

There is a considerable population of both White and Black Jews in the district of Cochin, in the south of India. The White Jews are the superior class. They claim to have come from Judea after the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus. They are almost as fair as Europeans, and retain the distinctive Jewish features. On the other hand, the Black Jews are of dark complexion, and have a less marked physiognomy. They are evidently of mixed blood; and it is probable that some of them are pure Hindoos, who have adopted the religion and style of dress of the Jews. Some of them are not distinguishable in personal appearance from pure Hindoos.

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Chinese.—The Chinese are chiefly found on the eastern side of India. There is a considerable colony of them in Calcutta, where they chiefly follow the trades of shoemaker and carpenter. They are found collected together in one particular street, and are easily distinguished from the other inhabitants by their peculiar physiognomy, their dress, thick-soled shoes like clogs, enormously wide trousers, and by the tuft of hair or pigtail at the back of their heads. They are also distinguished by their very peculiar accent and imperfect articulation when they attempt to speak English.

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CHAPTER XII.

General Remarks—Means of Improving the Character of the Natives.

WHAT are the most likely means of improving the moral character of the natives of India? The following appear to be some of the most obvious, noticing only such as depend on external European influence, and do not spring from the spontaneous efforts of the natives themselves.

The first, the most obvious and the most powerful means of improving the moral character of the natives, is to diffuse among them the principles and pure morality of the Christian religion. If we could succeed in bringing any large portion of them under the influence of Christian principle, nothing more would remain to be done. If we could make the Hindoos genuine Christians, it would be tantamount to regenerating their whole moral nature.

But how are we to convert the Hindoos, in heart and life, to the principles of our religion? The efforts used for this purpose may (as has hitherto been very much the case) fail of their effect. Christians cannot

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be made to order. They cannot be steadily and regularly manufactured out of Hindoo elements by any process of human agency, or by any machinery at our command.

Besides, may there not be some danger that while we fail in our attempts to Christianize them in heart and life, we may succeed too surely in un-Hindooizing them? May they not, as the effect of our evangelizing efforts, throw off their own superstitious prejudices, and, along with them, the wholesome restraints which these impose. Instead of making a good Christian, we may only make a bad Hindoo. I have heard a devoted clergyman in India,* who had at the same time a great reputation for sound judgment, declare that if he could with a wish divest the Hindoos of all caste feelings, he would not do it. He declared solemnly that he would not do it, unless he could at the same time supply a substitute, unless he could plant in their minds right principles, which would act as a moral restraint upon their conduct.

Another popular means for improving the national character, less powerful, perhaps, but susceptible of a wider application and more certain in its effects, is to call in the aid of education, meaning by that a sound literary and scientific education. I do not know of any better remedy for some of the diseases that afflict the native mind, especially for the superstitious notions by which it is infested, than a sound scientific education.

* Those who remember the Rev. John Tucker of Madras will know the weight to be attached to his opinion.

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But here again the same exception may be taken. It may be said that if Hindoo youths are once emancipated from the evils of ignorance, they may become, so to speak, unrooted, un-Hindooized, may be left without fixed principles, and be by passion driven into every form of excess.

I do not know that there is much danger of this, as regards any large proportion of those who are brought under the influence of education. I am rather inclined to hope that, as early prejudices give way, new principles, resting on a more solid foundation, will take their place. I have met with a great number of natives who did honour to the education they had received in the government schools. Their minds were enlarged and their tastes refined. More than all, their understandings were opened to a more comprehensive view of God's universe, to the proofs of power, wisdom and goodness everywhere displayed, and to a providence ruling over all.

Along with education, we must depend upon the printing press as a means of dissipating the ignorance and improving the character of the natives of India. There seems to be no reason to doubt that the art of printing will gradually extend throughout the country, carrying in its train innumerable blessings. This wonderful art will spread and spread, until we find it planted in every considerable town. What we read of as taking place in the neighbourhood of Calcutta will be illustrated in many other instances. A native workman, who was employed by the Serampore missionaries, more than

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half a century ago, in cutting punches, obtained such an insight into the art of printing, that he afterwards made a press for himself, and commenced printing on his own account. He published various books in the native languages, including almanacs and school books. He also tried his hand at woodcuts, and struck off numerous cheap pictures of the Hindoo gods, which met with a ready sale among the native population.*

It is impossible to say in how many ways a knowledge of so useful an art will spread. I have lately seen in the newspapers an account of a young man who left his native district of Nagpore, and proceeded to Poonah to receive an English education. While there, he observed attentively all that was passing, and among other things picked up a knowledge of lithography. On his return to Nagpore, he set up a lithographic press and commenced printing almanacs.

It is equally impossible to say how widely, and through how many channels, printed books, spreading from one point to another, may be distributed through this vast population. The following anecdote is believed to be strictly true. A scientific treatise on geography, in the Bengalee language, was printed at Calcutta, for the use of native schools. By and by some one translated it into Hindustanee, in which form it spread over Upper India. A Brahmin from the Madras coast met with the Hindustanee version at Benares. On his

* This fact is mentioned in one of the early numbers of the Friend of India.

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return home, he translated it, and printed it in the Teloogoo language. Thus, this little volume, containing correct scientific information on geography, passed from province to province, and from language to language, among the various races of this great continent. The impulse commencing at Calcutta, spread to Benares, and from thence it rebounded to the Coromandel coast, Brahmins themselves becoming the principal channels through which it was conveyed!

It has been said by a very competent authority, that of the various agencies which can be brought to bear upon the civilization of India, the greatest of them all is the railway. The railway, it has been said emphatically, is *the greatest missionary of them all.** It is now at work, facilitating commerce, promoting the intercourse of society, and uprooting the prejudices of thirty centuries. It is, indeed, quite impossible to over-estimate the effect of this mighty agent, to estimate what its effect will be not only upon the material but upon the intellectual, the moral, and, may we not add, the religious condition of the natives of India.†

Among the human causes which tend to raise the

* See Sir Charles Trevelyan's remarkable evidence before the parliamentary committee of 1853.

† Macaulay has well said that of all inventions, the alphabet and the printing press alone excepted, "those inventions which abridge distance have done most for our species. Every improvement of the means of locomotion benefits mankind morally and intellectually as well as materially." — See Macaulay's History of England.

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tone of national morality, there are scarcely any more powerful than those which Government holds directly in its own hands, and which accompany the ordinary exercise of its authority. Good laws, efficiently administered, have great influence in improving public morals.

Again, who can doubt that one way in which Government can aid very efficiently in improving the character of its subjects, is by opening an honourable career for well directed ambition! Who can doubt that it would have a very beneficial influence on the natives of India, if Government were to open to them situations of dignity, to which they might rise in a perfectly honourable way, by the exercise of talent combined with integrity? It is not enough merely to lecture men on the duty of morality. It is not enough to educate them in the truths of science and philosophy. Education will rather encourage than suppress ambitious yearnings and the desire for honourable distinction. Lectures, reading-rooms, libraries, social intercourse, will not fill up the aching void. All these, in the absence of more solid benefits, will be regarded as shadows, not substantial things.

Strange objections are sometimes raised to the elevation of the natives to offices of trust and dignity. It has actually been said that if one native were elevated, it would give rise to jealousy among the rest. What an idea! If the honour were fairly won, if it were bestowed upon the most worthy, it would surely have no such effect. Those natives themselves who venture to

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give expression to their real opinions, repudiate such a notion with scorn, and laugh at the idea that the promotion of one of their number would make the rest unhappy.

Sometimes we hear it said that it is our duty to advance the natives to high appointments gradually as they become qualified, but we must not be in a hurry, we must wait till their moral character is improved. We forget to what extent morality consists of good habits. How are these habits to be formed without practice? One of the greatest promoters of honesty, as of energy and decision, is actual experience in the discharge of duty. The virtues of the heart, like the faculties of the mind, are best strengthened by exercise.

Let me not be understood as saying that Government, by its direct patronage, can do all; or that Government can do much in this way, in comparison with what society, under favourable conditions, can do for itself. In England, where there is no positive barrier, how few belong to the official class? The appointments in the direct gift of Government must always be few in number, compared with those which, in every well ordered state, grow out of the wants of society, and which society creates for itself. Let Government do its duty as a Government, in protecting the country against foreign invasion, in affording reasonable security to property within the state, and the natural growth of seciety, under these favourable conditions, will create openings for the available talent and integrity of the

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country, so that the want of official patronage will scarcely be felt.

It is an interesting question, what will ultimately be the effect of European ideas on the native mind? Take, for example, our political maxims, our philosophy, our scientific discoveries, our religion. Some speak as if the effect would be sudden and irresistible, sweeping over the country and carrying along with it the wreck of every old and venerable institution.

But we may rest assured that the change will not be of this kind. It is not in a moment that national prejudices are swept away. There are strong conservative forces in Indian society, which are opposed to all sudden change. These are anchors, so to speak, for keeping the Hindoo mind from drifting suddenly. The change when it comes will, if we may reason from the past, be slow and gradual. It must be confessed that some of what we consider our most vivifying ideas, have as yet proved in India like hothouse plants, requiring extraordinary care barely to keep them alive.

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CHAPTER XIII.

Illustrations of Native Character—Runganadum, an Educated Brahmin.

It may be said of the great mass of the natives that we only see them moving around us. With a few only do we become personally acquainted; and that with the outside of their character only, while we remain in a great measure strangers to their social and domestic life.

Of all the Hindoos with whom I have become acquainted in India, perhaps the most interesting is my friend Runganadum, a Brahmin, and a native of Chittoor about thirty miles from Madras. He was introduced to me by Mr. Casamajor, of the Madras Civil Service, a most benevolent and large-hearted man. Mr. Casamajor took a great interest in him, and had the highest opinion of his character and talents, as the following letter from him will show. The letter was addressed to the head master of the Madras grammar school, where Runganadum was receiving his education.

"I really believe Runganadum to be worthy of all the culture that can be bestowed upon him; and in

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this confidence I am desirous he should remain with you as long as you think that he is likely to add anything to his knowledge. How long this will be, no one can judge so well as yourself. Indeed I have all along wished to give you a *carte blanche* respecting him. I feel that he is in perhaps the most favourable situation for his improvement that could have been provided for him, and my only anxiety has been that he should be able to take the fullest advantage of that situation. I do not know to what extent you have acted on the authority to supply him with books, but I wished it to be understood and acted upon in a very liberal sense. He is now likely to require more and more, and I beg of you not to stint him. For instance, I have no sort of objection to your supplying him with an encyclopedia and the best dictionaries, if you think the time has come for him to use them with advantage. You need not tell him (and I had rather you did not) that the books are given him as his own, or by whom they are supplied. He will think they are yours, and so perhaps take more care of them. You may give them to him as his own when he leaves."

Runganadum's personal appearance was very much in his favour. He was, for a Hindoo, rather above the middle height, stout, and well made. His complexion differed but little from that of a European well bronzed by a tropical sun. His features were regular and even handsome, his eye bright with intelligence, his forehead one of the finest I have ever seen. The expression of his face was generally serious. He always wore the

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old Hindoo dress—a white cotton wrapper round his waist and hanging down to his ankles, and a fine muslin scarf thrown loosely over his shoulders.

I knew Runganadum intimately for several years. He read with me at my house, Adam Smith's "Wealth of Nations," Locke's "Essay on the Understanding," and Paley's "Natural Theology."* I was astonished to find so little difference between his mind and that of an intelligent European. His mental powers were indeed equal to those of any European of the same age I have ever known, while his amiability, truthfulness and manly honesty were above all praise.

At what I may call our meetings for mutual improvement (for I was a gainer from these meetings as well as Runganadum), at which times the books I have mentioned were diligently read, we often engaged in general conversation after the more serious business of the evening was over. I remember having an interesting conversation with him one evening on the subject of the social condition of his countrymen. He seemed to be convinced that the backward state of his countrymen was mainly owing to a silly reverence for old customs, however absurd they might be. He sometimes spoke on this subject with much earnestness. On another occasion he said he had lately received letters from his friends at Chittoor. They had heard, he said, that he ate food with Europeans; that he was going

* Besides these, the works which he studied with most interest at school were Herschel's Astronomy and Arnott's "Elements of Physical Science."

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to England; that he had made up his mind to become a Christian; and what not. His wife, his mother, and other relations were much grieved at these rumours, and this made him very unhappy. Some of his own caste at Madras also persecuted him. They pretended that he was no longer a Brahmin, because he told them that the earth was round and revolved on its axis once every day.

As a proof of Runganadum's liberality of mind, I may mention that he did not object to learn by heart, along with the other pupils of the grammar school, the church catechism, and even the creed. He thought it right to conform to the rules of the school. He read also along with the other pupils, Paley's "Evidences of Christianity," and when examined upon it he usually gave a fair and manly answer to all questions, expressing his own candid opinion with temper and modesty. Truly, in some things, this heathen scholar was an example to Christians, such was his liberality of mind, his truthfulness, and humility.

Notwithstanding all his liberality and candour, I never saw much reason to hope that he would renounce Hindooism and become a Christian.* He was well acquainted with the evidences of Christianity, as mere

* Mr. Casamajor thus spoke of him in one of his letters:—"He does not appear to have any religious impressions, or rather I should say he appears to have renounced them. He once, for several Sundays, attended divine service, and appeared to have some opening conviction; but it soon passed away like the early dew."

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arguments addressed to the understanding, and his mind was in a remarkable degree free from prejudices and open to conviction. Still, he did not evince any decided disposition to change his religion. I can never forget his modest seriousness one day when I spoke to him on the subject. On asking him whether, now that he had read Paley's Evidences, he did not believe in the truth of Christianity, he held down his head in a meek, submissive manner for some moments, and said nothing. His regard for truth would not let him say with his lips what he did not believe in his heart, and he held down his head and said nothing. After some silence, he looked up with rather a sly smile.

The following is an extract from one of his letters, written while a student at the grammar school.* "I was, during the whole of last week, engaged at the rate of two or three hours a day, in writing an essay on Female Education. It is rather too long. It consists of twenty-eight pages. During the time that I was writing the essay, I was led to consider when would my countrymen learn to see education in its true light, and appreciate it for its own sake, and not pursue it with the unworthy motive of making it a tool for procuring money. I clearly see that the greatest of all benefits that either a European or a native can do for the good of this country, is to disseminate the happy seeds of education. I think it unlikely that the natives will be

* It may be observed that in all these extracts Runganadum's own words are invariably used just as he wrote them, without the smallest correction in any one point.

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inclined to enlighten their females by educating them, unless the men themselves are first well educated. In all the civilized countries of Europe, the education of the females was subsequent to that of the males. Hence in this country, too, the education of the males should precede that of the females."

The following letter, which I received from him when absent from Madras, on a visit to his friends at Chittoor, will give some further insight into his character.

"With sincere respect I beg leave to address you the following letter. I am detained here longer than I expected. I am extremely reluctant to stay here, and am anxiously looking forward to my return to Madras, and hope to reach it soon. I am now very fond of algebra. I worked all the problems of quadratic equations in Hutton's Mathematics, with the exception of five, which I find too difficult for me to solve. My esteemed friend, Mr. H. Groves, has lent me his algebra by Euler, and I have worked several questions in it. These questions I have copied in my book of exercises. I am now so far reconciled to the study of the book, that when I meet with a difficult question, instead of laying it aside, as I used to, I sit down with patience and try for an hour or two the right method of working it. I have revised the Sixth Book of Euclid, and I see practically that there is more advantage to be gained in reading the same book *often*, than in reading several books *once*.

"The friend of mine whom you saw some months ago in Mylapoor, is now reading with me Smith's

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Wealth of Nations. By assisting him in that book I derive some benefit, which is this:—When I read a book, I understand the meaning of it, but then I find it difficult to express the ideas of the writer in my language. Now, in reading it with my friend, I am put to the necessity of explaining it to him; which I cannot do to his satisfaction, unless I study the subject myself and think properly before I speak.

"Mrs. Davis, a very intelligent lady, and one of my best benefactors, lent me an improved edition of Paley's Natural Theology with notes and illustrations. It gives me a better idea of some of the subjects that are treated of in that admirable book."

In another letter, written also from Chittoor, he says,—"I saw my generous and kind patron, Mr. Casamajor, at his house.* He received me with extreme kindness, of which it is my sincere desire to prove myself worthy. I was conversing with him for about half an hour. He asked me about my studies with you, and he was happy to learn from me that you feel a great deal of interest in my improvement, and are pleased to attend to my lessons in Herschel's Astronomy, and Smith's Wealth of Nations. He told me that he had the highest esteem for you, and that you would assist me in my studies so long as I deserved your kindness. He then asked me about my views after leaving school. I mentioned to him my views without

* Mr. Casamajor was at that time judge at Chittoor; from which office he was, a year or two after, transferred to the higher appointment of judge of the Chief Appeal Court at Madras.

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the least reserve. I told him that I would be very glad to be employed in the projected University of Madras, and that very few situations would be so much to my mind as that of teacher or Professor in the University, where I would have a wide field before me to exert myself for the benefit of my countrymen. I told him that I deem it my duty and feel it as a pleasure to wait for his advice on the point, and treat it with due respect. He concluded his observations with this assurance, that, '*You will always find a firm friend in me. God bless you!*' My heart is full of gratitude towards Mr. Casamajor, and I am sure that my respect and esteem for him will continue through my whole life."

After Runganadum's return to Madras, I took an opportunity one day, at Mr. Casamajor's request, of speaking to him with the view of ascertaining the leaning of his mind in regard to his future profession. Knowing that some of his friends thought he might get on well as a pleader in the provincial courts of the Madras Presidency, I took occasion to sound him on the subject, and asked him to tell me all he knew about native pleaders. They certainly did not stand high in his estimation. The word *pettifogger*, in its least respectable sense, seemed to express very nearly the sum and substance of his ideas on the subject. He thought, whether correctly or not I cannot say, that they were, one and all, a knavish set. I told him that in our own country, while some of the same class were such as he described, others bore the highest character; that their integrity was no bar to their success, and that I

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imagined it might be much the same in this country—those who were inclined to be honest, might be honest if they pleased, and might, in spite of their honesty, get on well in their profession. He seemed, however, to think there were no exceptions; that the pleaders were out and out bad; and that if any one of them were to act an honest part, the others would combine against him to ruin him.

The interest which I take in Runganadum, and which I trust may be shared by some others, induces me to say a few words more about him. In 1845, being at that time in Calcutta, I received the following letter from him, written from Chittoor. It will be seen that the latter part of it is written in a desponding tone.

"After you left Madras, I remained, as you know, the better part of three years at the High School, under the kind instructions of Mr. Powell, who took, during the whole of that period, a degree of interest in my improvement which I can scarcely find words to express. Mr. Casamajor continued his bounty towards me during the period, and his residence at Madras gave him frequent opportunities of personally inspecting my studies at the school. In fact, the most enlarged account that I could give of his love and generosity towards me, would be but a poor attempt at approximation. During my last interview with him, he was kind enough to express his entire satisfaction with my conduct, and used these words:—'*Why, Runganadum! I feel myself perfectly rewarded by your conduct. Go—God bless you!*'

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You are no stranger to the excellent disposition and unbounded charity of my patron, to require my poor testimony in his behalf.

"During the first two years of my continuance at the High School, I had made up my mind to prosecute my studies regularly in mathematics, and procure the situation of assistant teacher in the projected engineering college, and had even the vanity to fancy that I might rise to be a professor, in the same way as Bala Gungandara Shastri at Bombay. Under this pleasant impression, I let slip several opportunities of procuring situations of large salaries in the way of translator and interpreter, &c. But lately, when the Government of Madras smashed all the plans of the projected engineering college, I was obliged to give up all hopes of becoming a teacher in the way I expected. The subsequent hostile attitude of the Government towards the High School, gave me no hopes of their presenting me with any situation I was fit for; and after undergoing a variety of trials, I was at last obliged to give up all hopes of getting on at Madras in the way of procuring any situation, and to trace my way back to Chittoor with some letters of introduction from Mr. Casamajor to the collector and judge of that place. Mr. Norton, as president of the University Committee, addressed the Government to dispose of me in some becoming way; but without any success. Several persons, who were once my pupils, have now shot ahead of me. I am not at all sorry for what has happened; for sincere resignation to the dispensations of Providence is the

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best refuge under all trials. I write this to furnish you with materials to think upon, and that you may see what great inducements the people here enjoy for the study of arts and sciences."

The next letter, received a few months later, is written in a more cheerful strain. It says:—"I am extremely happy to communicate to you a piece of news, that it will no doubt give you great pleasure to learn. I am now the chief interpreter of the Supreme Court at Madras—a promotion from the post of a head writer in a court in the provinces, to what is considered the most respectable situation in the Presidency that a native can aspire to. The change has been brought about in a way the most honourable to myself and just and impartial to the community. On the vacation of this post, which happened two months ago, the judges were determined to exercise their patronage in a way calculated to insure and promote the interests of the people—*i. e.* by offering the situation to the best scholar and the most efficient interpreter they could select by public examination. The moment I learnt that this post was thrown open for competition, I sent in my application, and offered to stand a trial in Teloogoo, Tamul, Mahratta, Canarese, Hindustanee, Persian, Sanscrit, and English. Some of my European benefactors and teachers were pleased to give me the most favourable testimonials I could expect with respect to my qualifications and character. When the trial came on, it so happened—thanks to Heaven! that my superiority was perfectly decisive; and last Friday

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I was nominated to the post of chief interpreter. I am now perfectly content, so far as my income is concerned, which, I believe, is close upon Rs. 500 a month; and my present ambition is to prosecute my studies in English literature and the vernacular languages, and to set a good example to my countrymen. I write this in haste, that you may enjoy the news of the good fortune of your ever grateful pupil, RUNGANADUM.

"P.S. My friend and benefactor, Mr. Casamajor, is perfectly well. I pray Heaven may give him health and long life. He is at the Hills." *

* Runganadum is still living, and is now a native judge at Madras. So far as I have heard, he continues remarkable for his intelligence and integrity, and in his riper years fulfils the promise of his youth.

It was of Runganadum that Mr. Norton, formerly President of the Madras University, thus spoke, when examined before the parliamentary committee of 1853:—"He is a young man of very powerful mind, and would have been a distinguished man at either of our universities. He is as remarkable for the strength and powers of his mind in mature life, as I should say almost any European."

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CHAPTER XIV.

Illustrations of Native Character—Mathew, the Syrian Deacon.

I WILL now give a short sketch of another native of Southern India, of a different stamp from Runganadum, and belonging to a different class—a native Christian, but not a member of either the Protestant or the Roman Catholic Church. At the time when I first met him, he was a deacon of the Syrian Church in the south of India.*

Internal dissensions have of late years arisen among these Syrian Christians. One section wish to purify their church from the abuses which have grown up within it during the course of centuries; while another section, at the head of which is the present *Metran* or Bishop, wish to stand on the ancient ways and preserve the existing state of things.

The party of progress having shown some disposition to amalgamate with the Church of England, the friends of the latter were naturally anxious to do everything in

* Those who have read Dr. Claudius Buchanan's "Christian Researches," do not require to be reminded that a colony of Syrian Christians is found at Cochin, in the south of India, where they have been planted for many centuries. Some interesting information on the same subject will be found in the recently published Life of Bishop Wilson of Calcutta.

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their power to encourage this tendency. Various steps were taken from time to time having this object in view, and among them the one which I am about to notice. With the view of giving an impulse to the movement towards reform, the committee of the Church Missionary Society at Madras induced Mathew and George (two young deacons of the Syrian Church) to come up from Cottyam to prosecute their studies in literature and theology. George, the younger of the two, was as yet only remarkable for his gentleness and simplicity. Mathew had more character, and it is of him I wish to speak; though only briefly, and with reference chiefly to one eventful period of his life. Mathew was, undoubtedly, a Hindoo by descent, though belonging to the sect of Syrian Christians who are believed to have originally emigrated from Syria. His features were entirely of the Hindoo type, and were no way distinguishable from those of the natives of Southern India. At the time when I became acquainted with him, he was twenty-two or twenty-three years old. He was a small lean man of very dark complexion. His beard was thin and short, his eye watchful and restless, his smile more expressive than pleasing. You might not unfrequently observe in his eye an expression intensely inquisitive. Sometimes his face darkened with a scowl, half concealed under cover of a smile. It was curious to contrast the quiet simplicity of George's countenance, his open eye and easy smile, with the fiery glances, the shrewdness and inquisitiveness of Mathew's more expressive features.

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On his arrival at Madras, Mathew was placed at the grammar school, where he remained for a year or two, prosecuting his studies with great ardour. He was then placed at the theological institution of the Church Missionary Society at Madras, where he was boarded along with a number of young Europeans and East Indians, who were under training for missionary work in connection with the Church Missionary Society. All this time he was supported by the society, free of expense to himself or his friends.

While attending the grammar school, he lived in the house of the Rev. Mr. Tucker, the secretary of the "Corresponding Committee" of the Church Missionary Society. Though, in deference I believe to native prejudices, he was allowed to take his meals apart from the family, he was always present morning and evening at family worship, attended Mr. Tucker's church on Sundays, and gave other indications of a disposition to cast in his lot with the Church of England.

After Mathew had resided for two or three years at Madras, he visited Cottyam, his native place, and had frequent interviews with his uncle, who was one of the most active leaders of the movement party in the Syrian Church. On his return to Madras, it began to be suspected that he was not acting with perfect sincerity. The superintendent of the theological institution, and Mr. Tucker the secretary, watched him closely. Not content with viewing the present, they instituted strict inquiries into his past life; and the result was, that Mathew's connection with the Church Missionary Society

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was brought to an abrupt close. But let me give Mathew's own version of the affair, as it is in this way that I can best exhibit his character.

One evening Mathew called upon me in great distress, and I had a long conversation with him. He mentioned that the Church Missionary Society had resolved to terminate their connection with him, for the reasons given below, which are stated, as nearly as I can recollect, in Mathew's own words.

"In the first place," said Mathew, "I am accused of having told a lie. On a late occasion, the students of the institution were required to translate some verses of the New Testament into Latin. I gave in my exercise along with the others. The superintendent, on looking over it, asked me if I had made use of Beza's translation. I said, *No*. This I regret, for I did make use of it, and I afterwards confessed it to the superintendent.

"In the second place I am accused of having, when at Cottyam last year, told my friends that I sat at table and took my meals along with the superintendent of the institution and the other students. Now this charge arises from a misconception of what I said. I remember conversing with one of the missionaries at Cottyam, who questioned me about the arrangements and management of the institution at Madras. In answer to his inquiries I may have said, *we take tea at such an hour, with the superintendent*. By this I meant that the students generally did so, without intending it to be understood as including myself. I

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am quite sure I never intended to say that I ate the same kind of food as the European students, or sat at the same table with them; nor can I conceive any motive to induce me to make such a statement.

"I am also accused of having, while at Cottyam, been seen chewing tobacco. I do not plead guilty to this charge. Even if it were true, however, I might defend myself on the ground that the practice of chewing tobacco can hardly be considered immoral. It is nowhere said in the decalogue *thou shalt not chew tobacco.*

"I believe," said Mathew, "that my chief crime in the eyes of the Church Missionary Society consists in having, while at Cottyam, made arrangements with my uncle that I should go on a mission to Antioch, with the view of collecting information regarding our mother church. We see that various abuses have crept into the Syrian Church in India, and are desirous of having them removed. The missionaries of the Church Missionary Society are anxious we should join the Church of England and be under the Bishop of Madras. But this we will never do, being resolved to remain in our own Church, in its own name. The Church Missionary Society are aware of this, and suspect me of having deceived them all along as to my views. I am led to think so from conversations I have had at different times with Mr. Tucker."

Such was Mathew's statement. How far it was a true statement of the case, I am scarcely in a position to judge.

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There is no doubt, I believe, that the Church Missionary Society brought Mathew up to Madras, in the hope that he would join the Church of England, and exercise an important influence over the wavering minds of his countrymen in future years. Mathew, on the other hand, appears to have continued all the while firmly attached to his own church, which he wished to reform, but not abandon. This gave an indecision to his conduct, which prevented him from appearing to advantage.

Some time before the separation took place, Mathew told me that he intended to resign his connection with the Church Missionary Society, and to leave Madras. When the separation did take place, he thought the society used him ill in raking up charges against him, with the view of blackening his character. More than once when conversing with me on the subject, he was much affected, and even shed tears. He seemed to think that all his actions were misrepresented. He could do nothing but what was made a ground of complaint. He was accused of conceit and pride. Pride was discovered in his walk, in his looks, in his smile, and even in his handwriting. He was accused of being disingenuous. If he looked cheerful, he was dissembling; and equally so if he looked sad. He assured me that he had not, that he never had, any intention of joining the Church of England; that he never made any secret of his attachment to the Syrian Church, the Church in which he was born and bred. I said to him that he seemed to have acted not altogether in a straightforward manner.

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He smiled, and said that sometimes, when Mr. Tucker took a roundabout way of getting information from him, he took a roundabout way too. When Mr. Tucker went round one way, he went round the other. But when a direct question was put to him, he assured me that he always gave a direct answer.

Soon after this, Mathew left Madras, and set out for Antioch, to visit the Church of his fathers. He was accompanied by another native Christian called Constantine, who had been a fellow pupil of his at the grammar school, a young man of very mild and pleasing manners, who was said to be a son of the Rajah of Travancore. The next communication I had from him was in a letter written from Vengorla. After giving an account of his journey so far, he said,—"I need not mention to you how we were robbed, and thereby brought into great distress and affliction, as it is already well known to you. My old friends railed at me, and said that I had been punished for my sins. Knowing this, I forbore writing to any one about it. Almighty God, however, without trying us above our power, brought us to a broad place, even to Belgaum, where we met with Mr. Taylor.

"We remained at Belgaum for six months, till the rains were over. Mr. Taylor gave us our food, &c. I taught in the school, and preached. There were many gentlemen who offered to assist us in our mission to Antioch, to the Patriarch, to be ordained by him. But my old friends have been pleased to afflict me, and to blast my prospects. They wrote to some gentlemen

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here, saying we were malcontents, deceivers and unsanctified persons; and that it was a heinous sin to give any assistance to us; for we were going to Antioch not to be ordained, but to bring a bishop from thence, and to make schisms in our Syrian Church, and to bring a competent person to wage war with our present *Metran*. Having heard these accusations, all who were ready to assist us, and who rejoiced in us, withdrew their hands and counted us as outcasts.

"I cannot, in the present circumstances of things, return to my native country without being ordained; for my people will not receive me. Our present *Metran* swore by his life that he will never ordain me, because I was a partner with the missionaries. Without being ordained, I cannot effect the reformation we have in view. I intend to proceed to Merchin in Diarbeck, where our Patriarch resides, through the Persian Gulf, which is the nearest way and safe too. My brother Constantine is obliged to remain behind, on account of his health. I therefore left him with Mr. Taylor."

He then reverts to his "dear friends" and the misery they had brought upon him, hinting pretty plainly that he was in much the same condition as David, when he was pursued by his enemies and hunted like a partridge on the mountains.

This was the last direct communication I had from Mathew. But I have since heard that he succeeded in reaching the place of his destination, and was not only ordained, but ordained a Bishop, by the Patriarch of

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Antioch. He returned to his own country with flying colours, not only an ordained pastor, but with power conferred upon him to ordain others.

This I can say of Mathew, the Syrian Deacon, that he was a young person of decided talent, and that the training he received at Madras, though it had not the effect of making him break off from his own Church, qualified him in no ordinary measure for introducing improvements in it, and acting the part of a true reformer. If he had been endowed with more of Nathaniel's spirit, and been absolutely without guile, he would have appeared to his European friends in a more amiable light. But it may be a question if he would have been better fitted for the work cut out for him among his countrymen. There must always, and in all countries, be a certain harmony between the character of the pastor and that of the people, or little good will be done.

What the result has been of Mathew's efforts, whether he has given proof of his ministry by introducing reforms into the Syrian Church and realizing the dreams of his youth, or has found the superstitious prejudices of his countrymen too strong for him, I have not heard. Nor have I heard whether he has been again reconciled to the Church Missionary Society, to which in his youth he was so greatly indebted.

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CHAPTER XV.

Illustrations of Native Character—Gopal Lall Roy, a Hindoo College Student.

My friend Gopal is a student of the Hindoo College. He is nineteen or from that to twenty years of age. Though of a jet black complexion, his countenance is very pleasing. His features are regular, his eye bright, his deportment grave and self-possessed. He dresses rather with a leaning to the antique Hindoo style, than to the new-fangled fashion of some of his classmates.

But it is in his character as a student that I wish to speak of him. In the class, consisting of between thirty and forty Hindoo youths of his own age, he is remarkably diligent and attentive. Whoever is the teacher finds in Gopal a modest attentive pupil. As surely as the day comes round, so surely is he found in his place, and found entering with zeal and a most happy cheerfulness upon his appointed duties.

It happens here, as at home, that some students take more to literary, and others to scientific studies. One

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student finds that his taste leads him in the direction of literature, and to it he devotes almost exclusive attention. Another imagines that he has a mathematical head, and considers literature as beneath his notice. Gopal does not belong to either of these classes. He throws himself heartily into both his literary and mathematical studies, and has attained as great proficiency in both as if each was the exclusive object of his attention.

There are minds which are quick and ready, and others which are comparatively slow. Gopal's mind is of the latter class. He requires time to examine his subject. This is seen both in the oral and written examinations. On these occasions there may sometimes be observed a want of promptness. He pauses to consider and to find the right expression, but when allowed the requisite time, he unfolds his ideas in a very orderly and beautiful manner.

Speaking generally, his acquirements are rather solid than showy. He does not shrink from a difficult subject. On the contrary, he delights to try his strength upon it. It is impossible to witness the movements of his searching mind on these occasions, without feeling profoundly that the Asiatic intellect, in its best specimens, differs little from the European; that it has both strength and subtlety; and that nothing is wanting to its success in any pursuit but persevering study under the impulse of proper motives.

Let me now advert for a moment to his moral quali-

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ties. The following are the most striking features. In the first place I may observe that he is truthful in the extreme, and in the highest sense of the word. I do not merely mean that he would not tell a lie. This does not express enough. His whole character is pervaded by truth and sincerity.

I can say, with perfect confidence, that he is as free from vanity, and from that shade of it called conceit, as any young man I ever knew. On no occasion does he attempt to push himself into notice. At all times his behaviour is marked by the most unaffected modesty. He is in point of scholarship undoubtedly one of the first students of the college. But he seems unconscious of it. It has no tendency to unsettle his mind. He seems habitually to feel that he has a great deal yet to learn. In a word, the possession of knowledge seems to have the same effect upon him, which it is found to have on those who have made the greatest advances in knowledge, in whom it only deepens the conviction that the great ocean of truth still lies before them.

It would be a mistake to suppose that the deference with which he listens to his teachers, indicates a disposition to receive their opinions with blind submission. A modest firmness is no less a feature of his mind than submissive attention. He examines and judges for himself, exhibiting a proper share of independence, along with much candour and modesty. In the classroom, the shade of doubt that sometimes visibly crosses his mind, is a sure proof that there is a difficulty in

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the way, and that further explanation is needed. It cannot for a moment be supposed that Gopal would affect to entertain a doubt which he does not feel, or which will be found on examination to rest on frivolous grounds.

No one can be long acquainted with Gopal without observing his singular candour and fairness in judging of others. In every country, and in none more than this, the character of a man is liable to suffer from gossip and unfounded suspicions. Gopal is cautious in believing, on mere idle rumour, any unfavourable report reflecting on the character of those with whom he is acquainted, and which is contrary to his experience of their character.

So much regarding a young man, whom I consider one of the best specimens of a Hindoo student I have met with in this part of India. Should it please Providence to spare his life, I doubt not he will prove an ornament to the society in which he moves, and exhibit a practical illustration to his countrymen of the benefits flowing from an enlightened English education.*

* This hope was not destined to be realized. Gopal died early, while still a student, to the great regret both of his teachers and fellow students. He died suddenly, just before one of the annual examinations, for which he had been preparing with eager diligence.

It is remarkable that several of the most distinguished Hindoo college students have died in similar circumstances. I may only mention Gopal Kissen Ghose, a young man of the highest promise, who was suddenly cut off during one of the annual exa-

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minations. The examiners, men of high standing in the state, in recording his untimely death, and his brief but bright career, ventured to express the opinion that if he had lived, he would have become a distinguished man of letters, and an honoured instrument for diffusing European principles and opinions among his countrymen.

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CHAPTER XVI.

Illustrations of Native Character—Madub Chunder Dutt, or the old Baboo.

One of the most interesting natives I have ever been acquainted with, was Madub Chunder Dutt, the old baboo, as we used to call him. He has been lately removed from his family and friends in a manner equally unexpected and startling. Let me write down what I can remember of the dear old man, and endeavour to present him as he appeared in his daily life. I do not mean his domestic life, for though very intimate with him I was never admitted to his house. I can only give a few glimpses of him in so far as his character revealed itself in conversation, and in letters written by him of which I happen to have copies.

Madub in his youth had been banyan, or native agent, to the wealthy Calcutta firm of Colvin and Co. In this capacity he amassed a large fortune. At the time when I became acquainted with him, though bordering on seventy years of age, he was still fresh and vigorous. He dressed in the old Hindoo garb, and was always scrupulously neat in his attire. He was short and stout, and had a pleasant intelligent countenance. He was indebted for his success in life more to

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his native shrewdness and energy of character than to any education he had received. He spoke English fluently, but without any pretensions to grammatical accuracy.

In the conversations I had with him, which were pretty frequent, as he often came over to my house in the morning or evening, he was fond of discoursing on the incidents of his early life. It appears that at the outset of his career, he was banyan to Mr. Petry, a Calcutta merchant. He was then, as he expressed it, "a young hand." He used always in the evening to go to Mr. Petry's house and go over with him the transactions of the day. Then Mr. Petry would advise him "where he done right" and "where he done wrong;" would impress on the young banyan as a sterling virtue to keep all receipts and vouchers, and to take a copy of every letter he wrote, saying to him—"Young man, always take copy."

At length Mr. Petry died, after which his widow went to reside at the Cape of Good Hope, leaving Madub to manage her affairs at Calcutta and to sell some property which belonged to her. So satisfied was she with his upright integrity, that, when everything was wound up, she wished to give him "a certain number of rixdollars." But he said, "No. If you have any nephew, give to him. That will give equal pleasure to me."

The old baboo used to dwell pleasantly on the reminiscences of his early life. Everything came up fresh to his mind, as if it had happened yesterday.

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One of the anecdotes he was in the habit of telling was of a French captain, who one day paid to Madub's sircar ten thousand rupees in excess of what was due. The baboo, on discovering the mistake, sent the sircar back to him to explain what had happened. The captain was sitting at dinner when the sircar entered. The latter said to him rather abruptly, "Sir, you make mistake in account." "I make mistake!" said the French captain, flourishing his knife in his hand. "If you say I make mistake, I cut your head off." The poor sircar, frightened out of his wits, took to his heels. Madub then went himself, and after some conversation, said to the captain, "Sir, pray how much you take from bank to-day?" "How much you pay?" "How much you now have in hand?" The captain now saw the affair in its true light. It flashed upon him that instead of receiving too much, he had paid too much away, and he was quite willing to listen to any explanations. He commended the young banyan for his honesty, and said repeatedly, "Thank you, young man. Thank you." Nor did his gratitude end here. He introduced Madub to Mr. Joseph Baretto, a wealthy Calcutta merchant, to whom he told the above anecdote. Mr. Baretto, on hearing it, took Madub "by both hands," and was ever after his friend. The baboo would tell all this with a countenance beaming with pleasure.

During the most active period of his life, Madub was employed as banyan to Colvin and Co. In this capacity he amassed, as I have said, a large

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fortune, estimated by some at a hundred thousand pounds sterling. I have even heard it estimated at thirty lacs of rupees, or three hundred thousand pounds. This handsome fortune he realized by fair means, without defrauding his employers, whose esteem and affection he retained throughout. The head of the firm returned to spend the evening of his days in England, and I have seen letters to Madub both from him and his wife, expressive of the greatest esteem. In one of these letters, Mrs. Colvin, with motherly affection, commended to his care one of her sons who had just come out to India in the civil service of government. This son now holds a high appointment in the judicial department in India, and is one of the ornaments of a service distinguished above most others for ability and practical talent.* The son of this gentleman has lately arrived here, so that the baboo has seen three generations of Colvins in India, and has had the

* I allude to Mr. John Colvin, afterwards Lieutenant Governor of Agra. The following is a letter from Madub to the gentleman in question, written a few months after the latter—at that time quite a young man—arrived at Calcutta:—

"I very much obliged you sent my letter to your honoured father, and my many many salaams to him. I very glad you bought new buggy for your necessary supply, it is well and deserved so. But meantime you will love to your books, such as you are begin with, and try to be man of business, and I hope you will rise to high posts, and be well known as a Burra Saheb. Next time when I will go to Calcutta I hope I will see you with your best Persian hand and language, from which will give me much pleasure indeed."

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pleasure of welcoming to these shores both the son and the grandson of his early patron.

He continued all along to have a great regard for the Colvins, and often spoke of them with the most devoted affection. Much of what he said has escaped my recollection. A few faint traces only remain. I remember one day his telling me that he had been down at Calcutta, visiting one of the brothers, who had been residing up the country and whom he had not seen for many years. He was quite full of the subject, and of the conversation he had with the son of his old friend. Among other things he said that on inquiring of the saheb if he was quite well, and all his family well and comfortable, the latter replied, "Yes, baboo. Thank God I am quite well. Everything has prospered with me—except that I have no son and heir," using the Hindoo word *puttro,* which signifies literally *a deliverer from hell.* The old baboo was much amused at hearing this expression from the lips of an English gentleman. He repeated the word more than once, greatly interested and diverted.

A considerable portion of Madub's wealth was invested in house property. Some of his houses were in Calcutta, palaces inhabited by the European gentry, and yielding a rent of some thousands of rupees a year. He had also houses at Chinsurah, where he was now residing. Where his treasure was there was his heart also, and his conversation not unfrequently turned upon these topics. One evening when he called about

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sunset, he told me a strange story about one of his Chinsurah tenants, a Mahomedan merchant, who had resided in the same house for a number of years, and, as the baboo said, "always paid rent." At length the merchant went to Burmah, leaving his wife and two children behind him; and depositing a sum of money in the hands of a Mogul who lived in the village, ("you know," said the baboo, "that Mogul with one eye,") to pay the house rent and provide food for his wife and children during his absence. The merchant unfortunately died soon after his arrival in Burmah. For some months the house rent was paid regularly, and then, in the words of the baboo, "after two three months, the Mogul not pay." The baboo sent his sircar to inquire the reason, who came back and said, "Baboo, that woman for two three days got no food. Children got no food." Upon this the baboo went to the house himself, and found that the Mogul refused to give any more money. The mother was sitting in tears, "with two fine sons, and one *koka* (parrot), that could speak few words." The baboo, touched with pity, took the children to his house, and, as he expressed it, gave them food and sweetmeats. The baboo's wife said to him, "The children's mother got no food. We must give her something." The baboo said he would give her sixteen rupees a month, "for food and one servant." He then went to the Mogul, and said, "Why you not give this woman food? Why you not pay rent?" The Mogul said, "I got no money. Money all done." He

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added, "I got two wives and no children. I adopt these two boys as my sons. Let one of the boys be the son of one wife, and other boy of other wife." Madub communicated this information to the mother, who replied, "My God! Rather let me die than part with my children. This Mogul's two wives will poison each the other's child, and I will lose both!" What was to be done? Madub, finding that the poor woman's father was living at Lucknow, wrote to him informing him of his daughter's situation. Two or three months after, the father came to see his daughter. Madub discovered that he was one of his old "cloth merchants," from whom he had purchased cloth in former years to send to "Belat" (Europe). He was now old and poor. He said to Madub, "Now got no money. No cloth now go to Belat. Only cloth now come from Belat."

After staying a few days, the father said that he wished his daughter and her two sons to return with him to Lucknow, and preparations were made accordingly. Before leaving, they wanted Madub to take all the furniture of the house and everything that was in it. "No, no," said Madub, "you keep them all." Finding him resolved, they said, "Then take this koka." "No," said Madub, "that koka is your life. You make it speak. I not take it." All this was told with an artlessness which made it quite interesting. The face of the old gentleman beamed with benevolence as he told the story.

Another day he told me that he had just received

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a letter from the magistrate of the district, who occupied one of his houses. The magistrate wanted Madub to make certain repairs, which would cost altogether about fifteen hundred rupees. The magistrate wrote a plausible letter, in which he endeavoured to make out that the proprietor would be a gainer by the outlay; but this was not so evident to the baboo, who said, "I not see this. Many gentlemen before live in this house. All like it very much. Why magistrate not like it also?"

A few days after, the baboo brought me a letter which he had just written to the magistrate, declining to be at the expense of the repairs. He said to me, "Do you think it will do?" I said he had expressed his meaning clearly enough. "Then," said the baboo, "do you think the magistrate will like it?" I felt bound to say that the magistrate would not like it, because when one makes a request he likes it to be granted. "Yes," said the baboo, "he like me to comply." The upshot of the matter was, that the baboo declined to execute the repairs. The house, he said, belonged to his wife. She got the rent. "Must have something to live. Magistrate *weave all cloth his own side*." Whether owing to this disagreement, or some other cause, the magistrate did not stand very high in Madub's opinion. He rather insinuated this, than expressed it in direct terms. He would say, "You understand! Sun rise in east, and in west go down, then dark. When sun shine, then no thieves. When sun not shine, then thieves." In this way he

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would insinuate that the magistrate did not shine as a luminary in the district, and was no great terror to evil-doers.*

One day I received the following letter from the baboo, showing, as it seems to me, genuine kindness of heart. One of my family was at the time suffering from a severe illness. "I beg to send you two small limes, of which smell will be much pleasure to her,

* On another occasion I had a long conversation with the baboo about his houses in Calcutta. Mr. S——, an attorney, occupied one of them. The house just opposite was a government office. It was determined to raise the latter a little higher, and Mr. S—— found it would shut out the view, and render his house a less desirable residence. Upon this he wrote to the baboo, and asked him to call. When the baboo called, Mr. S—— thus accosted him,—

"Baboo, what is this they are doing? This will shut out the view from my verandah. I will take out a writ against you!"

The baboo replied,—

"You take out a writ against me! Very well; you shall be my attorney in this case!"

Mr. S—— laughed, and then proceeded to write a formal letter in the baboo's name, to the secretary of Government, requesting him to give orders that the alterations should not be proceeded with. The baboo looked over the letter, and shook his head, saying,—

"I will not sign this! This is attorney's letter! I will write letter in my own stupid English."

Accordingly he seated himself at the desk, and penned the following epistle:—

"Honoured Sir,

"You very good solid headed gentleman. You know what is right. Mr. S—— very angry with me for this building. It shut out fine view. Therefore I humbly beg you not proceed it."

This letter had the desired effect.

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and I sent a man to collect very good limes from Omerpore, Bansbary and Simliah. As soon as I get it I will send you. I hope, by will of God, she is better than yesterday, and I recommend you to attend yourself, from which you will find her well very quick. Excuse me that I trouble you."

One object which interested the baboo greatly during the last years of his life, was the opening of a public library in the town where he resided. In the first instance, he gave a donation of Rs. 500 to set it going. In addition to this, he exerted himself diligently to get others to subscribe. The Rajah of Burdwan had been written to, and had promised a donation, but several weeks elapsed and the money was not forthcoming. One day the baboo called and requested me to write to the Rajah to remind him of his promise. He said, "Rajah not got memory. Not like English gentlemen. Must be reminded."

I had many a conversation with Madub about the library. One day, on saying to him that it was very kind to take so much trouble, he replied—"It gives me much pleasure. This is public object. If those who read the books will be happy, I much more happy." But though most friendly to the object, and doing much to promote it in a private capacity, he would not allow his name to be placed on the committee. When invited, he declined on the ground that he was "an old bullock." This was a favourite phrase of his, and meant that his work was done, and that he was now useless.

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A new chaplain came to the station, who, hearing that the baboo was liberal in his contributions, ventured one day to ask him if he would be disposed to contribute something towards purchasing a clock for the church. On meeting the baboo some days after, he said to me, "That new chaplain rather pucka hand. What you think he said? 'There is no clock to the church, baboo. If you buy clock, you will get great name.' I said to him, 'You are clergyman. You set good example. You buy clock for church. That will be very good.'"

About this time the magistrate appointed him a member of a panchayet for regulating the municipal affairs of the town. After thanking the magistrate, he said—"I not fit for that purpose, thank God I retired from business. Have the goodness allow me to rest now? I now old bullock. I beg inform you the time is short this voyage. Must now think of my Maker."

Among the most interesting of his remarks were those dropped in conversation on religious subjects. In these remarks might generally be found something indicating religious reverence, though not always expressed in the most judicious or well chosen words. Madub had thrown off most of the superstitious forms of the Hindoo faith, though, as will appear, he had by no means thrown off the feeling of religion.

I spoke to him one day about the Christian maxim, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." He replied immediately, "That very good. Our Bengalee people think it more blessed to receive than to give."

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One evening the baboo called about sunset. I was walking in the compound, and Madub, leading his young son by the hand, joined me. The tom-toms were sounding loud from the neighbouring temples. Madub did not much admire that style of worship. He said—"That nothing. God not bother his head about that." Then, laying his hand on his heart, he said—"God want confidence." He then went on to speak of God's goodness and mercy. He said, in this we should imitate God. "If we do so, then God very much pleased. Will give much pleasure to God Almighty."

Another evening I had an interesting conversation with him. The baboo said, "I now like to please everybody. If you pleased one anna, then I pleased two annas. I wanted two annas. God Almighty give five annas. Therefore must be thankful." He said his greatest happiness in life now was to do good, because now "time is scarce," meaning that he had not long to live. He then went on to say that he always took a drive early in the morning in his carriage. He sought some retired place where the birds were singing. "Then the heart thankful to God Almighty." He then spoke of the unbounded love and mercy of God. He said—"When we do ill, God not remember it. God like one mother. Mother take child in bosom. If child good, mother too much pleased. If child naughty, mother not too much angry. Same with God Almighty." Thus the old man went on, giving expression, in his quaint way, to such

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feelings as arose in his heart at the moment. He then spoke of himself as an "old bullock" that required rest. I said, "You have done your work, and have done it well." "Yes," said he, "I commence from so big," lifting his hand to the height of the table. "Sometimes storm come on, captain say, 'anchor gone.' I call people, and get all right. Sometimes merchant say, 'this must be in ship this night.' I call many hands and get all done. I get great name." He then took leave, highly pleased with these reminiscences of the past.

The year before his death Madub paid a visit to the Upper Provinces, I believe on a pilgrimage to Brindabun, though he did not say so. About that time, or perhaps a little earlier, for the date is wanting, the following letter was written:—"Long time after I take this opportunity of inquiring your good health and how you are going in this world. Thank God I am retired from business now, and looking after what may be done for next world, if I can be used any way to please Him and his creatures. His name is the best of all, but I so useless that I often forgotten Him. Will you do me this favour to bless me, to allow me to take his name often with my whole and lovely heart, in consequence that you been mercy upon me frequently, and wishing you good and every respect."

The last time I saw my old friend was on Christmas eve. I was walking in the garden, and he came in, holding his youngest son, of about four years old, by the hand. It was a lovely evening, and we walked

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about for some time. The baboo, as usual, was cheerful and talkative. His mind went back to the scenes of his youth, and the changes that had taken place in Calcutta since he was a boy. When he was a young man, he said, there were few ships at Calcutta. All the large ships lay at Diamond Harbour, and in the way of business he used often to be there. When we parted he told his little son to make his salaam. The child, whose deportment was very grave and decorous, made his salaam very gracefully. The baboo shook hands and walked away very cheerfully, bringing his stick firmly down on the ground as he walked along. I returned to the house, little dreaming it was the last time I was to see the dear old man.

And now he is no more! I have been most anxious to discover the cause of this sad event, which has so suddenly removed a most interesting figure from the midst of us.* A mystery hangs over it, which no one can penetrate. No wonder there is much wild conjecture. It is difficult to discover a motive for the barbarous deed. The baboo was remarkable for his hospitality and genuine kindness. As a native friend said to me, "He was a very respectable man. He used to feed about a thousand people." I am not without a painful impression that the love of money was the

* He was shot dead! He had been in Calcutta, and was returning in the evening from the railway station to his house, when he was attacked by some ruffians. Two shots were fired. One wounded the coachman, and the other killed Madub, who was sitting alone in the open carriage.

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root of this as of so much evil. Though in some instances open-handed in giving it away, yet the habit of amassing, of laying house to house and field to field, had grown with his growth and strengthened with his strength, and so become a second nature to him. The baboo once or twice hinted that there was a suit pending in the courts between him and another party, about a piece of land, a *chur*, or small island, formed in the river. The suit was recently decided in the baboo's favour. It is possible that this may have had something to do with the sad occurrence. The defeated party may have taken this method of clearing off old scores. God only knows!

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DOMESTIC LIFE

OF

THE NATIVES OF INDIA.

CHAPTER I.

Dress of the Natives—Ornaments.

The ordinary dress worn by the natives consists of two thin cotton sheets, one of which is wrapped round the waist, and the other round the body and shoulders. Here in Bengal, the piece of cloth which is worn round the waist is called the *dhotee*. It is tight above, forming a kummerbund or waistband; but hangs loose down the legs to the ankles, except when the wearer is engaged in such a way as requires it to be tucked up. The other piece of cloth is worn like a scarf or plaid round the body and shoulders. In the cold weather it is sometimes drawn over the head. Many of the lower orders wear only the *dhotee*, without the scarf for the upper part of the body. The cloth or material varies in fineness with the rank of the wearer, from coarse cotton to the finest muslin. The sheets of cloth are worn just as they come from the loom, without ever being

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touched with the needle, and are kept in their place by tucking the ends under the folds.

This dress, as worn by the wealthier classes, is elegant and graceful. The scarf, of beautiful white muslin, is arranged neatly round the body, veiling all but the neck; and the *dhotee*, also of thin muslin, hangs like loose drapery down to the ankle. It may, perhaps, to the eye of a European, appear somewhat effeminate; but it is singularly well adapted to a climate like that of India during the hot weather.*

The costume of the natives cannot be said to be perfectly uniform in all parts of India. It varies slightly in the different provinces, is somewhat different in the north and south, in the east and west. To some extent it follows the variations of climate. In the Upper Provinces, it is worn tighter round the body, and is of warmer materials, being adapted to a climate in which the cold is severe during part of the year. In the warmer regions of the south it is lighter and softer.†

* The following allusion to the dress and appearance of the natives, is found in Lord's Account of Surat:—"A people presented themselves to mine eyes, clothed in linen garments somewhat low descending, of a gesture and garb I may say maidenly and well nigh effeminate, of a countenance shy and somewhat estranged, yet smiling out a glossed and bashful familiarity, whose use in the Company's affairs occasioned their presence there."

† In the province of Canara, where it rains heavily during the greater part of the year, almost every native wears a coarse woollen wrapper over his head and shoulders.—See Life of Sir T. Munro.

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The Hindoos, those of them that follow the old native style, wear no separate headdress. The turban, or *puggree*, where it is worn, has been adopted from the Mahomedans. Out of doors they wear sandals or loose slippers, which are put off when they enter a house. The sandal, not unfrequently, consists only of a piece of wood fitted to the sole of the foot, and which is kept on by a knob which is held between two of the toes.

The Hindoo female dress is not unlike that of the males. European ladies would be surprised at its simplicity. It consists of one web of cloth, eight or nine yards long, which is wrapped round the body. It can be so arranged as to cover the whole body, and be drawn over the head also.

The web of cloth has a border at each end, and, like the male attire, is worn as it comes from the loom, without the aid of the dressmaker or being once touched with the needle.

The material varies in fineness with the rank of the wearer. The labouring classes wear a coarse kind of cloth, while the wealthier classes are clad in the finest muslin. The colour is sometimes white, sometimes blue, sometimes of a bright gaudy colour, such as green or yellow.

Those females who are in poorer circumstances, with the exception of such as are employed as ayahs in the houses of Europeans, may be seen walking about in a state of semi-nudity, their legs and shoulders

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bare, and with nothing but a piece of dirty cloth round the middle.

As a general rule it may be said that the Hindoos do not follow the vagaries of fashion to anything like the extent we do. It may be said, I believe almost without exaggeration, that the orthodox Hindoo dress at the time when Alexander crossed the Indus, is still the orthodox Hindoo dress worn in the present day. At the same time it may be observed that considerable deviations from the ancient costume have taken place among those classes of the community, who, in past times, had much intercourse with the Mahomedans. Many Hindoos of rank, on public occasions, wear the Mahomedan dress, consisting of loose trousers, a Cashmere shawl, and a turban. The ornamented slipper, too, seems to have been adopted from the Mahomedans.

And such is the power of fashion that the same classes are now beginning to wear the European style of dress, or something approaching it. They have not yet ventured to appear in a tailcoat; but pantaloons, shoes, and stockings, are coming into general use among the wealthier classes, who associate much with Europeans. I have even observed a disposition, in one or two instances, to lay aside the Mahomedan turban, and adopt a headdress bearing some resemblance to a European cap. Many of the higher class of natives in the Presidency towns now wear a surtout of white cotton or of silk, loose muslin trousers, and a white turban.

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The female dress, too, has undergone some slight change. In addition to the wrapper, it is not unusual in the present day for Hindoo women of the higher ranks to wear a petticoat and bodice, in imitation of the Mahomedan female dress. These form no part of the ancient Hindoo costume.*

Hindoo parents take a foolish pride in loading their children with ornaments. You will often see a young boy with massive silver rings round his ankles, so heavy that he can scarcely walk. When they grow up these ornaments are generally laid aside.† But it is not so with the females. Hindoo women wear massive rings on their fingers, arms, and ankles. Rings on the toes are not uncommon, and gold coins worn in the hair, or round the waist. And more remarkable still,

* Buchanan, in his notes on the Province of Goruckpore, says that almost all the young women there who could afford it, wore the petticoat, which, however, they laid aside when engaged in religious ceremonies, or in cooking. He adds that widows were not allowed to wear this "vanity."

† Slight variations may be observed in this respect as you pass from district to district. In travelling, for example, from Calcutta, when you enter the province of Orissa, you find many of the men wearing rings in their ears. I have observed some instances of the same kind at Madras. At Calcutta, the custom seems entirely to have gone out.

Some other slight variations may be observed in the toilet of the natives in different districts. In Orissa, the men generally wear the hair long, and tied in a knot at the top of the head; while nearer Calcutta, it is cut short as among ourselves. In Orissa, the little boys you see running about the streets, have generally a little frill of hair cut short just round the forehead, the rest being worn long and tied in a knot.

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almost every woman, rich or poor, has a gold ring in her nose. It is a much prized ornament. To be without it, is regarded by some castes as a sign of widowhood, and married women, it is said, have a superstitious dread of removing it from its place, even for a single instant.

The proverb holds good in India, that "all is not gold that glitters." Not unfrequently brass and pewter are made to do duty for gold and silver, and glass for precious stones. There is an odd kind of ornament which many of the poorest women wear on their wrists, consisting of a number of painted rings, made of a resinous substance called shell-lac, which in appearance resembles sealing-wax. These ornaments bear about the same relation to gold bracelets, that paste diamonds do to real diamonds. They are, however, showy, and please the wearers.

Shells and flowers are also worn as ornaments. You sometimes see young Hindoo women wear sweet-scented flowers (such as the Indian jessamine) as an ornament for the hair. I am told that flowers, which have been presented as an offering to some deity, are most prized for this purpose.

It is a common practice for Hindoo women to paint the eyelids, and round the eyes, with lamp-black, and the tips of the fingers and nails with the red *henna* plant. You frequently see young children also, both boys and girls, painted in this fashion.

Among the poorer classes of both sexes, there is less attention to personal cleanliness than one would wish

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to see. The clothes they wear are of a dingy colour, and are often worn to rags before they are washed. But among the middle and upper ranks, and even among respectable domestic servants, it may be said, without the slightest exaggeration, that cleanliness is the rule. Indeed it ranks among them as a religious virtue. They are cleanly, not merely from a regard to comfort, but as devout Hindoos, and their washings and purifications are unceasing. Along the banks of the river, and wherever there is a supply of water, they may be seen bathing from morning till night. Even among the lowest ranks ablutions are pretty frequent. In the heart of Calcutta the labouring classes may be seen constantly pouring water over their bodies, from the channels which convey it through some of the streets of the city.

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CHAPTER II.

Native Houses.

GENERALLY throughout the country, the houses of the natives have no pretensions to elegance or architectural beauty. In some districts there is scarcely a single superior house to be seen; and in others they appear only at rare intervals.*

The houses of the poorer classes are mean-looking in the extreme. They are small huts of only one apartment, and without windows to admit the light. The walls consist of coarse straw mats, fastened to a framework of bamboos; or of reeds, or alternate rows of straw and reeds, plastered over with mud.

The dwelling-houses of those who are a degree above the poorest classes, are buildings of a neater and more comfortable kind. The walls are of solid clay, and of considerable thickness. The floor is generally raised a foot or two from the ground; and there is a neatly thatched roof overhead. Here, in Bengal, the sides of the roof in the better class of cottages, swell out dome-like, and converge to a top—presenting to the eye an

* Buchanan states, in his Statistical Report, that he found in some districts scarcely one decent building.

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appearance not unlike that of an inverted boat. These cottages, in some of the rural districts, have an appearance of great neatness and comfort.

In order to maintain that privacy which is so congenial to native manners, the rural cottages may often be seen surrounded with a hedge, or other thick fence. Sometimes a bank of earth is thrown up all round the house, with a fence on the top. In the rural districts, you may often see the cottages standing beside a clump of trees. Sometimes they are shaded by the beautiful tamarind tree; sometimes by the palm, or the bamboo. There are few features of the Indian landscape more interesting to the traveller than these rural cottages, shaded with palms, or embowered, as it were, among tall bamboos which bend gracefully over them with their golden stems and dark green leaves.

Here and there brick houses are met with;—generally of one story—more rarely of two or three stories high. They have flat roofs (with a little parapet all round), which are covered with a composition of clay and lime, so hard as to be quite impervious to the rain. Those brick houses which are inhabited by the wealthier classes, have generally a square area in the centre—the apartments being ranged on each side, with an inner verandah in front of them all round. This square area, which is open to the sky, lets in the light, and makes up in some measure for the absence of windows. It also contributes greatly to the coolness of the apartments, which in this climate is so indispensable. Even in the largest native houses of this class, the stairs

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inside are generally extremely narrow; and the walls—not only outside, but inside—unplastered.

It is quite common among the upper and middle ranks for members of the same family to live together after marriage. Father and son, uncles and aunts, nephews and nieces—all live together as one family. When additional accommodation is needed, the house is enlarged by the addition of new apartments.

In the houses of the poorer classes there is very little furniture. A mat laid on the floor supplies the place of chair, table, and bed. There are a few earthen vessels for holding water or rice, an earthen vessel for cooking, a rude oil-lamp, made of the shell of a cocoa-nut, another piece of cocoa-nut, with a stick stuck into it, to form a spoon or ladle, and two small smooth stones for pounding curry. These form about the sum total of the furniture of the poorer classes. Those who are in better circumstances may have a charpoy, or wooden cot, along with a few brass lotahs or drinking cups.

Even the wealthier classes indulge but sparingly their taste for furniture. On entering the house of a wealthy baboo of Calcutta, you find the apartments bare and almost empty. There may be a chair or two for European visitors, and one or two cushions to recline upon, and a white cloth spread over the floor; but there is little more. Such is the primitive native style as exhibited in the houses of wealthy Calcutta baboos.

A striking exception to this rule may occasionally be

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met with, particularly among the more Anglicized baboos: some of whom have their houses gorgeously furnished in the European style. They are apt to go to excess. They do not know where to stop, and imagine they cannot have too much furniture. The apartments are literally crammed full of chairs, tables, and sofas; while the walls are covered with wall-shades, and mirrors; and magnificent chandeliers hang from the ceiling.

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CHAPTER III.

Food—Meals—Stimulants.

It is a very general opinion among Europeans that the Hindoos, through the length and breadth of India, live chiefly upon rice. This, however, is not the case. It is true that rice is the principal article of food in Bengal, and along the coast, and in particular districts in the interior, where there is an abundant supply of water for purposes of irrigation. But the inhabitants of the Upper Provinces and of the central parts of India, live more upon other kinds of grain, such as maize, wheat, and barley.*

Flesh-meat is not so entirely a prohibited article of food in India as many suppose, especially in northern India. Many of the highest Rajpoots and Brahmins eat mutton, goats'-flesh, venison, and the flesh of the wild hog. Even in Bengal, and in most parts of the south of India, flesh may be lawfully eaten by all classes,

* Tennant, writing from Benares, says that rice, barley, and peas, are the chief food of the labouring poor there; that wheat is raised for the higher ranks only, and that even barley is too expensive for the common people, and is usually mixed with peas. It is of the coarser kinds of rice only that the labourer partakes. The grain called *Bajira*, he states, is, from its cheapness, much used by the common people in the Upper Provinces.

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when it has previously been offered in sacrifice. This may be one reason that sacrifices are so common. In the southern provinces there is no kind of flesh-meat so much eaten as that of kids. Among all ranks, kids are reared for the purpose of being offered in sacrifice, and then eaten.

Various kinds of fish are abundant in the rivers of India, and are much used for food by all classes. They are generally consumed in the neighbourhood where they are caught. But in some parts of India they are dried in the sun, and sent to a distance to be sold.*

The most common, perhaps, of all Indian dishes is curry, which is eaten by all classes of natives. The ingredients are very various. There is scarcely anything, be it flesh-meat, fish, or vegetable, that may not be made into a curry.

The leading peculiarity of this favourite Indian dish —that which gives it its distinct character—consists of the hot spices with which it is seasoned, as pepper, betel, chillies, and the like. It always tastes hot and pungent. It is found in warm climates to stimulate the appetite and give a tone to the system. At home it is frequently considered unwholesome. But here, in India, it is a universal favourite among all classes, European and native, is considered perfectly whole-

* On the banks of the Brahmapootra, for example, they are spread on the sands along the river's side and dried in the sun in great quantities.—See Buchanan's Indian Statistics.

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some, and is esteemed the diet which, above all others, is best suited to the climate.

The natives of India are fond of sweetmeats — which indeed constitute a considerable part of their daily food. Sugar is almost invariably one of the ingredients. Some of the sweetmeats most commonly met with are made of ground rice and sugar, formed either into cakes or round balls. Sometimes curds are used as one of the ingredients, and not unfrequently the crushed kernel of the cocoa-nut.

The quantity of sweetmeats consumed in Bengal is enormous. They are found piled up in pyramids in almost every bazaar. They are generally, I think, more wholesome and suitable for food than those sold at home. Some of them are very good indeed, and have a delicate flavour; others, which are boiled in ghee, are too rich for the European palate, though relished by the natives.*

* Milk and butter are also favourite articles of food here as elsewhere. Milk is most relished by the natives when sour and curdled. The butter generally used by the natives is boiled, to make it keep longer in this warm climate. In this state it is called *ghee*, and has a strong flavour. Wealthy Hindoos use it largely to season their food.

I do not think I have ever seen cheese in India—I mean cheese made in India. Dry curds are frequently seen; but cheese, or pressed curds, is, so far as I have observed, unknown to the natives of Southern India. There is in Bengal what is called Bandel cheese, which is made at Bandel, some thirty miles above Calcutta. It is rather soft curd than cheese, and in size it is not larger than a small saucer. Such as it is, it appears to be rather of European than of native manufacture, and it

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It is usual for natives in some parts of India, however wealthy they may be, to have their food served on leaves for plates.*

But those whose habits we have the best opportunities of observing, eat their meat from unglazed earthen plates. By some castes, in accordance with their peculiar notions in regard to cleanliness, these plates must not be used more than once. After serving a single turn, they are thrown away, but, being very cheap, they are easily replaced. Certain classes, such as the Bengal sepoy, and many of our domestic servants, eat their curry and rice from a brass pan. They have also a small brass vessel for holding their drinking water.

The natives eat their food with their fingers: they use no knife, fork, or spoon. They do not even use chopsticks, like the Chinese, but eat their food in the manner which must have prevailed in the most primitive times.

Hindoos generally use the right hand only when eating; and, in drinking water from a cup, some of them pour it into the mouth without allowing the vessel to touch the lips.

The Hindoos are unquestionably a temperate people. Their favourite beverage is water; and, notwithstanding

may have been introduced by the Portuguese, who have a large church and monastery at Bandel.

* Tavernier, in describing one of the diamond mines which he visited in India, notices this custom. He says, "The dish on which the rice is served to them, is nothing more than leaves sewed together, which somewhat resemble our walnut leaves."

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the heat of the climate, there is an abundance of it pure and good in most parts of the country.*

Generally speaking, the higher castes abstain from intoxicating drinks. It is only the low castes who indulge the habit of using such stimulants.

The most common intoxicating liquor drunk by the natives is what is here called arrack. It is distilled from rice, and is highly intoxicating. It is generally condemned by Europeans as a most unwholesome beverage.†

* A few places may be excepted where little rain falls, as for example, in some sandy tracts in the north-west, where there are no wells, and where the rain that falls from the clouds is carefully collected in reservoirs and kept for sale.

† The word arrack is used by our writers in a vague sense. It is applied to various liquors, which, if not essentially different in their nature, are at least manufactured differently. Bernier states that the wine of this country is called arrack, "a strong water made of sugar not refined." Captain Alexander Hamilton, speaking of the inhabitants of Goa, says that the little trade they have "is mostly from their arrack, which is distilled from toddy of the cocoa-nut tree."

Toddy, or the juice of the palm, when drawn fresh from the tree, is pleasant and refreshing, and has no intoxicating quality; but after standing a few hours, it ferments, and becomes slightly intoxicating. By distillation the strength of the liquor is increased; and in this state it is drunk by low caste Hindoos, and is sometimes called Pariah arrack.

Buchanan, who is an advocate for stronger food and stronger liquor than the natives generally use, recommends them to drink the fermented juice of the palm-tree, instead of filling their stomachs with cold water, adding, in his sarcastic vein, that the state of Hindoo morals is not favourable to the views of those who advocate a water regimen. I believe that this writer stands almost alone in this opinion. Most Europeans of experience

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The Hindoos are a temperate people, but there are some exceptions. It cannot be said that they abstain, one and all, from intoxicating liquors. The feeling of aversion in regard to the habit of dram-drinking, is not universally the same in all parts of India. Among some of the hill tribes, for example, no disgrace attaches to it.*

Opium, and what is here called "bang" (an extract of hemp), are used to some extent; and in some provinces more than in others. The Rajpoots take opium to excess. They consider it more respectable, it is

are convinced that strong drink is utterly unsuited to the climate of India, and that those who partake of it, beyond the strictest bounds of moderation, are almost certain to shorten their days.

* It is said of one of the Bheel chiefs, Nadir Sing, that while kept a prisoner by the British Government, he was, at his own special request, supplied with brandy, and that he was by no means satisfied with his regular allowance of a bottle every four days.

Buchanan notices a custom which prevails among the tribes of the Rajmahal Hills. At their public feasts the chief person present goes round with a pitcher full of spirits, and pours into the mouth of each guest what he considers a reasonable quantity. No one is permitted to take the pitcher and help himself, because, says our author, it is well known that he would not remove his lips from it as long as a drop remained. Our author adds, that when he visited the district these people were at first very shy. After a while he discovered the key to their affections. He gave a feast to the principal men amongst them, followed by a liberal supply of drink. Upon this their shyness vanished. They came in troops with presents of honey, and were eager to impart all the information in their power. When he visited any of the villages, he found that his fame had gone before him, and every door was open to receive him.

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said, to regale themselves with opium, than to drink intoxicating liquors. In some parts of India, many of the higher ranks, after bathing in the morning, take a pill of opium.

The habit of swallowing opium is no doubt injurious to the health; most certainly injurious when it is taken to excess. The great danger in all these cases is, that the appetite may "grow by what it feeds on," until it acquires such an ascendancy as to be beyond the control of the will.

Tobacco is now cultivated all over India, and is used by all ranks of the people. No one loses caste by smoking tobacco. In this part of India,* Hindoos of all ranks, and of all castes, smoke incessantly; and to such an extent is it carried, that it has been computed each grown-up person consumes, on an average, one "seer," or two pounds, of tobacco every month.†

The instrument most generally used for smoking is a rude kind of hookah, commonly called a hubble-bubble. The hubble-bubble consists of a black bulb, filled with water, and a black wooden tube standing in it (one end of which is immersed in the water, and the other rises an inch or two above the bulb outside), with a small cup at the top. The tobacco is laid in the cup, along with two or three pieces of live charcoal. The smoke of the tobacco, which is sucked into the mouth through a small hole in the side of the bulb, passes through the water before it enters the mouth, and is thus both cooled and purified. It is quite clear that it is the

* Bengal. † See Buchanan's Indian Statistics.

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contrivance for cooling the smoke, that has specially recommended this kind of pipe for use in this hot climate.

In Bengal the hubble-bubble is scarcely ever out of the mouth of the natives. It is in request at all hours of the day. Native workmen refresh themselves with it before work, during work, and after work. Each in turn applies his mouth to the bulb, takes a few whiffs, and passes it to his neighbour. Those Hindoos who employ workmen under them, generally provide a hubble-bubble and a supply of tobacco, to make everything go on smoothly. In the evenings, when you see a number of native servants sitting together, and engaged in conversation, they are probably passing round the hubble-bubble. The higher classes; too, at their social meetings, use the hookah constantly. They smoke and talk, and talk and smoke. The custom prevails among them, also, of passing the hookah from one to another.

It is not usual for women of respectability to smoke. In so extensive a country as India, with its millions of people and its varied climate, it is to be expected that considerable diversity should prevail on almost every point. In some districts no woman of rank or respectability smokes. In others, the rule is not so rigidly observed. "In general," says a shrewd observer, "it seems to be considered more appropriate for the fair sex to chew tobacco, than to smoke it." *

* See Buchanan's Indian Statistics. You seldom, in Bengal, see natives either chew tobacco, or take it in the form of snuff. It

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You cannot be long in India without observing that the natives are fond of chewing a certain green leaf called pawn. This is the betel leaf; and it is usually eaten with the nut of the same plant, along with some powdered lime made from burnt shells. It is wrapped up in small packets, which the natives carry about with them. It is stimulating, but not intoxicating. It has a very pungent taste, and stains the lips and tongue of a bright red colour. All classes eat it, the Brahmins as much as any other, and both men and women. It is constantly taken after meals, and during a visit, or when travelling.* The custom is quite unknown among the European residents, who seem, on the contrary, to have a dislike to it.

It is generally observed that in the Carnatic, to take snuff is much more common than in Bengal. Buchanan states that he was never in a country where the custom is more prevalent than it is there. He adds, "Smoking, on the contrary, is in great disrepute. The hookah is totally unknown, except among the Mussulmans. The lower classes smoke cheroots. But a Brahmin would lose caste by so doing, and even the more respectable Soodras avoid it."

* Betel, or pawn, for it goes by both names, has been described by an old author as "a little knot made up of very delicate leaves, and some other things, with a little chalk of sea cockles, which maketh the mouth and lips of a vermilion colour, and the breath sweet and pleasing."

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CHAPTER IV.

Amusements—The Indian Nautch—The Kaputlee Nautch.

Every one has heard of the Indian nautch. It is one of the few native entertainments to which Europeans have access, and where they obtain a near view of the domestic manners of the Hindoos.

Nautches are held once a year at the houses of some of the wealthy natives of Calcutta, usually during one of the great festivals, when friends meet and leisure is most abundant. The European friends of the family are sometimes invited to be present along with the native guests. Let me describe what sort of entertainment this is, from my own recollections of what I have seen.

The open area in the centre of native houses is usually improvised into a hall for the occasion. An immense cloth stretching from end to end forms a canopy high overhead. The floor is laid with carpets. Chairs and sofas are placed round the room. Chandeliers and lamps hanging from the roof light the whole apartment. The host, or one of his sons, meets you at the door, and leads you into the room. You walk forward and look round at the gay scene. A

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number of well-dressed Europeans are sitting in the front row. Behind is a group of muslin-clad natives sitting on the floor. The younger members of the family, in holiday attire, mingle with the guests. Nor are the female members of the family uninterested spectators. Though carefully keeping out of view, a flutter of white drapery now and then indicates their presence in the upper apartments, flitting about the doors, or peeping through the jilmils.

The essential part of the nautch consists of dancing; but it is altogether a different kind of dancing from what we are accustomed to. The Hindoo does not dance himself. He hires others to do it for him, while he looks on. One or two professional dancing girls appear upon the stage, accompanied by a musician of the other sex, who plays upon a kind of violin or guitar, and sings.

The dancing girls are richly attired in a dress interwoven with gold and silver thread, and so stiff, that if placed on the floor it would almost stand alone. They are literally loaded with jewellery—earrings, nose rings, bracelets, heavy silver anklets, rings on every finger and on every toe. On first making their appearance, they advance into the middle of the room, where they stand for a few moments with great composure. They then begin to move slowly forward, waving their arms, making *passes*, as it were, at the company, bending the body from side to side, and turning slowly round. All this is done with great gravity, and in a dreamy sort of way. The musician

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all the while plays on the guitar and sings. Sometimes the dancing girl will advance to where you are sitting, make a shuffling movement with her feet and a few languid passes, and then slowly retire. Sometimes she puts a little more life and mettle in her heels, and runs suddenly forward as if under the impulse of violent passion. But more frequently the movements are slow and languid. The dancing, according to our notions, is wanting in action and spirit, and has a drowsy mesmerizing effect on the spectators.

Nor is the music of a lively kind, or characterized by much variety of expression. The instrument used is generally a *vina* (a small violin or guitar). When there are several musicians on the stage, as sometimes happens, a small hand-drum and a tambourine play a part in the performance.

The natives will sit for hours in dreamy silence, listening to this music. There is something in the languid movements of the dancers, and in the drowsy tinklings and monotonous cadence of the music, which seems to harmonize with their feelings.

It is sometimes said that the pantomimic gestures, which form an important element of the nautch, describe the passion of love in all its excess. People who think so must have a very lively imagination. The gestures are so obscure as to be absolutely without meaning to ordinary observers. If they represent love at all, it is merely certain phases of this universally interesting passion, beginning with the tender feelings and passing on to anger and jealousy. In this light,

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the nautch may perhaps be regarded as a mute drama describing the sentiment of love.

It sometimes happens that, after the dancing and music have ceased, native jesters are introduced to vary the entertainment. They go through a rude kind of comedy, for acting it cannot be called. The wit they display is not of the most refined kind, and may be aptly described as mere buffoonery. They endeavour to raise a laugh by making wry faces and hideous noises. So far as I have observed, there is little taste exhibited in these performances.

It is usual for the sons or near relatives of the host to wait upon the guests during the evening. They go round among them and converse with them, now and then presenting them with flowers or sprinkling them with rose water.

Not unfrequently at nautches given by wealthy families, refreshments are provided for the European guests. Tables are laid in an ante-room, with a great profusion of cakes, fruit, and wine. The host himself, or one of his sons, is usually present, but without partaking of the repast.

Though you may soon get tired of the nautch itself, you have an opportunity during the evening of conversing with the members of the family and other native guests, all of whom demean themselves on these occasions with the utmost propriety.

Different persons among the Anglo-Indian community take entirely different views of the Hindoo nautch. Some regard it in the light of a harmless

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and pleasing amusement, which brings the English residents and the respectable classes of native society together for innocent recreation and friendly intercourse. Others regard it as a Hindoo festival, in which are concentrated some of the worst elements of Hindooism. Certain it is that these entertainments have of late years become less popular among the European residents. The severe piety of the present day frowns upon them. It is sometimes said that to attend a nautch, is to countenance idolatry. I cannot at all concur with this opinion. If we betake ourselves to India, we voluntarily place ourselves in the midst of idolators. But do we thereby encourage idolatry? Surely not. It is quite as likely that our presence here may have the opposite effect. And in the same way, by entering a native dwelling and being present at a native entertainment (in which there is really nothing symbolical of the Hindoo religion) it cannot be said that we give countenance or encouragement to idolatry. Are we to dwell in the Hindoo land, and have no friendly intercourse with the Hindoos? Are we to avoid the natives in all business affairs, and in all amusements, for fear of countenancing idolatry? If so, our first and greatest fault has been to come to India at all, and the sooner we quit it the better.

I cannot but think that the growing disinclination on the part of our countrymen to attend nautches at the houses of respectable natives, is much to be regretted. It deprives us of one of the very few

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opportunities we have of an interchange of friendly feeling with our fellow subjects. It is in this way that we make ourselves foreigners in the land, and widen the gulf that separates us from the natives of the country of which we are so justly proud, and which may well be regarded as the brightest jewel of the English crown.

The Hindoo nautch is one of those amusements upon which the so called Christianity of the present day is most anxious to fix a stain. For a Christian to attend a nautch is now denounced as impious. At one time it was otherwise. The nautch was once deemed a harmless entertainment, which Europeans might attend with the utmost propriety. This, I think, was the correct view to take of it. There is no reason why we should associate with it the idea of religion at all. It is simply a social amusement, and offers one of the few innocent opportunities which Europeans have of mixing with respectable Hindoos in friendly intercourse.

Nautches are sometimes objected to by European moralists, on the ground that the dancing girls who play the principal part in these performances are persons of immoral character. I am inclined so far to agree with this opinion. The nautch girls are not generally considered persons of spotless virtue. They are not, in the same degree as the rest of the community, under the wholesome restraints of public opinion. In this respect they resemble our opera dancers, who may, in many instances, be very respec-

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table, but who, as a class, are not regarded as models of severe virtue.

But I do not see on what grounds nautches can be considered as an idolatrous religious service. So far as I have observed they have nothing of this character. They are social entertainments, which in all their accompaniments are no more connected with religion, than a musical entertainment or an opera dance among ourselves.

Nor am I aware that there is any foundation for another allegation, that the movements of the feet and hands of the dancers are a sort of pantomimic imitation of amorous passion. When you witness these pantomimic gestures, you are at first struck with a feeling of novelty, which soon gives way to mental weariness induced by the languid movements and monotonous music.*

* Mr. Kaye, in his interesting work on Christianity in India, points out as an instance of the progress of social morality among Europeans in India in recent times, the change of feeling which has taken place with respect to nautches. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, he says, the nautch occupied a prominent place. Every traveller, on landing in India, as a matter of course went to see a nautch. He admits that in our time nautches are decorous, and that there is nothing to offend the eye; that compared with the dances on the stage of a European theatre, they are propriety itself. There is nothing, he says, to object to as far as outward propriety is concerned; but he condemns them as being given on occasions of idolatrous ceremony, and as being performed in actual adoration of a graven image. I do not know on what authority Mr. Kaye is justified in declaring that nautches are performed "in actual adoration of a graven image," and I am anxious to learn upon

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There is a droll entertainment sometimes exhibited in India for the amusement of children, called the *Kaputlee* nautch. It is a kind of puppet show, in which a set of small figures are brought on the stage and go through certain evolutions in the Punch and Judy style. On the only occasion I ever witnessed this entertainment, a number of young children were seated in front of the stage looking on with wondering delight.

But to my mind, what followed was the best part of the performance. After the Kaputlee dance was over, a native, acting the part of a young European officer, with his native servant or bearer, appeared on the stage. The young officer was dressed in the most exact military costume, with red jacket, stiff collar, white trousers, boots and spurs. His cheeks were painted a glowing vermilion colour. In the first scene he walks the bearer up and down the room, haranguing him in broken Hindustani, in which the phrase "Toom gudda hi," signifying, *you are an ass*, occurred more than once, and giving him sundry cuffs to enlighten his faculties. In the second scene, the young officer is seated at a small table with a brandy bottle before him.

what grounds a writer of so much candour has been led to such a conclusion. If by saying that they take place "on occasions of idolatrous ceremony," he means that the celebration of them is mixed up with the religious worship of the Hindoos, he falls into the same mistake that it would be to assert that the performance of a Christmas pantomime and the celebration of religious worship in churches during Christmas week, are one and the same service.

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He takes up the bottle, pours some brandy into the tumbler and drinks it off. He is now rather elevated and begins to sing. All this time the bearer is standing mute, still as a statue, with his hands folded over his breast. Suddenly the saheb rises from his chair, holding a glass of brandy unsteadily in his hand, which he commands the bearer to drink there and then. The poor bearer finds himself in a very awkward position. He makes wry faces and begs to be excused, but his overbearing master will accept no refusal. At last he drinks it off and replaces the tumbler on the table. Then the saheb takes hold of his hands and begins to dance. On finding that the bearer is not very proficient in the art, he proceeds to teach him his steps, giving him now and again a box on the ear to quicken his pace.

In the third and last scene, a native dressed like an English lady is introduced to represent the young officer's wife. She is attired in a tawdry white dress, with bonnet and scarf to suit. The officer and his wife walk about arm in arm for some time, the young Englishman pulling his wife after him in a very unceremonious manner. They then dance a minuet with great energy, which brings this strange comedy to a close. The whole thing was comical in the extreme. The performers, be it remembered, were all natives, and it was surprising with what cleverness they imitated and caricatured the manners of our countrymen.*

* The reader may remember a somewhat similar illustration of the keen observation and imitative skill of the ordinary

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class of natives, in the Life of Sir John Malcolm. Sir John, when travelling between Poonah and Bombay, was accidentally detained at a small village on the way. It happened that there was an entertainment given by some of the villagers the same evening, at which Sir John was present. After describing a sheep dance, at which a number of the villagers skipped about on all fours like sheep, and a fowl dance, at which the performers sat upon their hams, and putting one hand over their head to imitate the beak of a fowl, hopped about pecking at one another, the account proceeds as follows:—"One of the company, who had seen something of English life, acted the part of an English lady. A white cloth, tied at the sleeves and waist, did duty as a gown; and under it was a hooped petticoat, bulging out over a framework of sticks. Another piece of cloth was formed into a bonnet. The lady proceeded to dance; she began by walking slowly up and down. In an instant after, this imitator of English manners burst into singing *la*, *la*, *la*, *tol*, *tolderol*, and danced and jumped about with amazing agility. All laughed, and expressed their admiration by loud plaudits."—See Kaye's Life of Sir J. Malcolm.

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CHAPTER V.

Amusements—Kite-flying—Pigeon-flying—The Indian Juggler.

There are a few popular sports peculiar to this country, and which we have, occasionally, opportunities of witnessing. Among these may be mentioned the childish amusement of flying paper kites.*

This amusement is here not confined to children. All ages join in it. You may see young and old assembled on the house-tops, looking up with eager interest at the kites flying far away, almost out of sight. It is not merely the object to make the kites fly for a long time, or to make them rise to a great height. The main interest of the sport lies in making them fight with one another. Two or more kites are sent up high in the air: then commences a series of manœuvres—the object aimed at being to make one cross another and cut its line. Each, under the guidance of a skilful leader, tries to grapple with his enemy, and place him *hors de combat*. The one which brings his opponent to the ground, flying triumphantly

* The Indian paper kite is small and light. It has no tail, but, notwithstanding, can be kept up for hours in the steady breeze which blows at certain seasons of the year.

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in the air, while his adversary rolls in the dust, or is wafted away on the breeze, remains master of the field. Large sums of money are often staked on the issue of the contest.

This sport is watched with eager interest by an excited crowd of natives, assembled on the house-tops: their hopes rising and falling as victory inclines now to one side and now to the other.

Another sport well known in some parts of India, is pigeon-flying. This also is a different kind of sport from what we are accustomed to in the West. Two flocks are let loose from different stands at the same moment, the spectators waving little flags to make them rise. They meet in the air and mingle. After a while each flock returns to its own stand: one of them generally succeeding in enticing away captives from the other. The object now is to ascertain the gain or loss on either side. The numbers are eagerly counted, and the winners then go in triumph to the losing party to demand a ransom for the captives.

This interesting sport attracts great crowds of young and old. When several flocks are seen rising at the same time, meeting in the air, mingling and parting again, it is a highly pleasing sight; and to the natives who have a stake in the issue, it possesses all the interest of a racecourse.

These are innocent sports. The one I am about to notice is of rather a different kind. There is here, in Bengal, a bird called the mina. Though no larger

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than our blackbird, and in appearance quite as inoffensive, it seems to have a natural genius for fighting. Looking over your verandah into the garden, you may sometimes see half a dozen of these little innocent-looking birds fighting furiously with one another. Now, these minas are sometimes trained to fight. The owners of the birds challenge one another; and after all the preliminary arrangements have been made, the fight comes off at the appointed time and place. I have heard that bulbuls (the Indian nightingale) are also trained to fight with one another. Instances have been known in which a young baboo issues formal invitations to his friends, desiring the pleasure of their company at a bulbul fight, to be held at his house on a certain specified day.

There are some other amusements which are more associated with India in most men's minds than those which have been just noticed. Among these, perhaps, the first place is due to the performances of the Indian juggler.

The Indian juggler, as is well known, is very expert in his art. He can climb a pole, keep up a number of balls at a time, draw ribbon from his mouth, eat fire, or swallow a sword, with an adroitness quite equal to that of his brother artist of the West.

Some of his performances are still more wonderful to the European eye. A half-naked juggler, with his arms and shoulders bare, takes in his hand the fresh twig of a tree, and running his fingers along it, strips off the leaves. To the astonishment of the spectator, a

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number of live scorpions fall with the leaves to the ground! There is no doubt about it. There they are, walloping on the floor. How did they come there? Who can tell? The juggler waves his arms in the air, gathers the scorpions up in his hand, and they disappear in the same mysterious way they came.

The Indian juggler attempts still greater feats than these. He actually contrives to *sit on the air*, at a distance of three or four feet from the ground, without any visible support whatever. There is a mystery about it which our European inquisitiveness has scarcely yet been able to fathom.*

* The rope-tying trick is also known in India. The following account of it, as performed by an Indian juggler, lately appeared in a Madras journal;—

"A native sat in a strong blackwood arm-chair. We fastened a rope to his right arm, passed it under the arm of the chair, round the back, under the left arm, and then made it fast to his left arm. We passed the rope backward and forward in this manner five times. We then fastened the rope round the right arm with a triple knot, and winding it round the ropes passing behind the chair about twenty times, made a triple knot at the left arm. We then carried on the rope to the wrists, and made them fast by crossing, recrossing, and knotting it. The thumbs were then tied together, and the rope carried back to the wrist and knotted. Afterwards we tied his legs together above the ankles, crossing and recrossing the rope in a complicated manner. We next bound his big toes together, and carried back the rope to the tie on his legs. We had used nineteen yards of rope—quite enough, we thought, to make him secure. The man could not move his hands either to his arms or his legs, so as to touch an end of the rope, and if he could have done so, they were tied so tightly as, in our judgment, to prevent him from using them. When he thought the tie was weak, he asked that it might be

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Another character which the Indian juggler assumes is that of a snake charmer. He goes about with a covered basket on his head, containing two or three cobras. This snake has the reputation of being very venomous. It certainly looks mischievous, but beautiful too with its arched neck and hooded crest.

When about to exhibit his art, the snake charmer sets his basket on the ground, and begins to play softly on a flute. After playing for some time, he kneels down, lifts the lid, and blows upon the snakes. He then steps back a few paces and begins to play again. After a little the snakes, one after another, raise their heads and look about them, with their arched necks and forked tongues looking very dangerous. The

strengthened; gave us perfect liberty to tie him as we liked; and at his request we continued binding him after he appeared to us to be quite secure. More than twenty minutes elapsed before we had finished binding him. I afterwards put a paper round the rope where it crossed between his legs, and where the last knot was tied, and sealed it with sealing-wax and stamp. We left him at the west side of my study, seated in the blackwood arm-chair before mentioned, he promising that when we returned he would be sitting in a teak arm-chair on the east side, with the ropes arranged exactly as we left them. In five minutes he summoned us, and we found the paper and seal undamaged, and every knot and portion of the rope as we had arranged them—only he was seated in the teak arm-chair. I wished to see if he could unfasten himself, and left him to do so. In four and a half minutes he recalled us. We found the rope stretched out over the floor, and the man unbound and erect before us. We could have remained in the room by allowing him to cover himself with a sheet during the performance of the trick."

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snake charmer continues to play on the flute, with which the snakes appear charmed and delighted. They stand erect, waving their heads backward and forward, keeping time to the music, and darting forward their forked tongues to strike, if any one goes near them. Sometimes you may see half a dozen of them all dancing at once, with their heads and necks raised a foot or so from the ground, and waving backward and forward to the sound of the music. When the music ceases, they lie down as if exhausted by the effort.

The snake charmer seems to have the snakes completely under his control. When they dart forward as if to strike, he whisks the end of his scarf at them and quiets them instantly. If he wishes to catch one of them, he seizes it by the tail with one hand, and moves the other quickly along the body to its neck, where he holds it fast. The creature is completely in his power, and though it opens its jaws and thrusts out its tongue, it can do no harm.

The snake charmer sometimes plies his vocation in another fashion. He goes from door to door seeking employment, and offering his services to catch any snakes that may be lurking in holes in the house or garden. The means he employs for this purpose are very simple. He merely plays on a flute. After playing for some time, the snakes come from their holes attracted by the music.

Certain it is that snakes frequently appear on these occasions, which the snake charmer allures from their retreat. But whether they were there before, or were

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put there by the snake charmer himself, is a question involved in some obscurity. The general opinion seems to be that they are put there for a purpose, after undergoing a certain training and having their poison extracted.

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CHAPTER VI.

Amusements—Religious Festivals.

Some of the Poojas, or religious festivals of the Hindoos, have very much the character of outdoor amusements.

In Bengal, the most popular festival is the Doorga Pooja, which is celebrated in honour of Doorga, the goddess of slaughter. It is held in the month of September. Annually, as this season comes round, there is universal rejoicing; business is for the time suspended, and every one is intent upon holiday making. It is usual, at this season, for the scattered members of the same family to reunite under the paternal roof. Any one living on the banks of the Ganges will observe, about the end of September, numbers of little boats passing up the river, laden to the water's edge with natives returning to their homes for a brief period from their places of business in Calcutta.

On these occasions, large sums of money are expended by wealthy natives on illuminations and nautches. Religion mixes itself with the rejoicings; goats are sacrificed in great numbers in honour of

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Doorga, and images of the goddess are carried in procession, and afterwards thrown into the Ganges.*

It is sometimes said, with what truth I know not, that this festival, at present so popular in Bengal, has sprung up since the arrival of Europeans in the country, and was unknown under the Mahomedan Government. To this day it is unknown either in the Upper Provinces or in the West of India. Some of the older inhabitants of Calcutta can remember the time when it was considered of less importance in Bengal, and was celebrated with far less display, than in the present day.

Another Pooja, having still more of the character of a popular amusement, is the Hooly Festival. It is celebrated in the spring, in honour of Krishna. The Hooly Festival is, in its way, a kind of carnival. It is a season of universal rejoicing. The barriers which divide the different ranks disappear, and reserve and decorum are, for the moment, in abeyance. It is a common practice at this season for the natives to throw red powder at one another, or to squirt it in a liquid form from syringes on the passers-by. You may see, for

* It is a peculiarity of some of the Hindoo festivals, that the image of the deity in whose honour they are celebrated, is carried in procession, and afterwards thrown into a river or tank. This seems to apply more particularly to the female divinities.

Professor Wilson observes that the Bengalees have a passion for throwing the images of their female divinities into the Ganges. This is done especially in the case of Doorga. Another goddess who is honoured in this way is Saraswatee.

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a few days at this period, domestic servants (especially up-country servants), and even some of the more respectable classes, going about with their clothes all red.

In Bengal, this festival is not so popular as the Doorga Pooja. It is more popular in the Upper Provinces, where it is the great annual festival.*

Another popular festival is the Churruck Pooja, or Swinging Festival.† This festival, like the Doorga Pooja, is highly popular in Bengal. I have never witnessed it in the more southern provinces. It may be briefly described as follows :—

At the top of a high pole, fixed firmly in the ground, two or three long poles or arms turn horizontally on a swivel. At the end of each long arm is a human being, suspended by iron hooks fastened to the muscles of the back. These poor wretches, by means of ropes, are whirled round in the air. There they are, hanging by the back, their naked limbs dangling in the air, while excited crowds below look on, and evince their admiration by frequent huzzas. It is a fearful, a

* Buchanan appears to give a somewhat exaggerated description of this festival. In his notes on the province of Goruckpore, after mentioning that the people go about throwing red powder and dirty water at one another, he says that the grand part of the ceremony consists in using abusive language and singing obscene songs. All join in it, he adds, except the old and infirm. They go into the streets and public roads, and attack whoever they meet. The women assemble together within doors, and abuse each other with more indecency than the men.

† Professor Wilson considers the Churruck as part of the Hooly Festival. A minute and interesting account of it will be found in his Hindoo Sects.

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diabolical sight to see them whirled round with great velocity. If the rope by which they are fastened were to break, they would be dashed in pieces to the ground. But I believe the ordeal is less painful and less dangerous than it appears. You may see the miserable performers throwing about their limbs in frantic excitement, clapping their hands, and carrying on a colloquy with their friends in the crowd. The sport seems to have an indescribable charm for them; and, I believe, it very rarely happens that any accident occurs, or that any fatal consequences follow from what appears to the spectator a mad freak, and a wilful tempting of Providence.*

I am not sure that this festival will hold its ground long. There seems to be no doubt that it was much more fashionable some years ago than it is now. It was formerly patronized by the higher ranks of natives. Now, none but the lower orders countenance it. It has sunk most deservedly in public estimation. The more intelligent and respectable natives are ashamed of it, and regard it as a relic of barbarism (which it truly is) which has no claims to respect, and which holds its ground only by force of custom.

There are other festivals known in this part of India which are of a more pleasing kind than the foregoing.

* Ward takes notice of this barbarous festival, which he paints in the darkest colours. He states that in the year 1800, he saw, in the vicinity of Calcutta, five women swung in this manner with hooks in their backs. It may be doubted if women ever now-a-days exhibit themselves in this way.

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One of the prettiest is the following. Rows of small lamps are lighted before the doors, and arranged along the edge of the roofs and windows of houses, which burn clearly for hours in the still air. In another festival of the same pleasing kind, small lights are sent one after another down the river. They may be seen in the still night, floating to a great distance, appearing and disappearing by turns with the ripple on the surface of the stream.*

* Among the Rajpoots there is a festival called Ponjol, which is described as of a pleasing character. It is held on the last three days of the year. The natives devote the first day to mutual visits, compliments and feasting. On the second day the women bathe with their garments on, and cook rice and milk in the open air. On the third day there is a grand procession of cows, with their horns painted, and garlands of flowers round their necks.—See Tod's Rajasthan.

There is a similar festival celebrated about the same season of the year in the south of India.—See Wilson's Hindoo Sects.

There is an annual festival called the *Ras Yatra*, in honour of Krishna. It commemorates Krishna's dance with the Gopees. Wilson gives the following highly interesting account of it in his Hindoo Sects:—"This is a very popular festival, and not an uninteresting one. Vast crowds, clad in their best attire, collect in some open place in the vicinity of the town, and celebrate the event with music, singing, and dramatic representations of Krishna's sports. All the public singers and dancers lend their services on this occasion, and trust for a remuneration to the gratuities of the spectators. At Benares the *Ras Yatra* is celebrated at the village of Sivapur, and the chief dancers and musicians, ranging themselves under the banners of the most celebrated of the profession, go out in formal procession. Tents, huts, and booths are erected, swings and roundabouts form a favourite amusement of the crowd, and sweetmeats and fruits are displayed in tempting profusion. The whole has the character

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Of the Mahomedan festivals, there is none celebrated with so much pomp in India, or which receives so much countenance from all classes of the population, including Hindoos as well as Mahomedans, as the Mohurrum. The object of this festival is to commemorate the death of Hassan and Hoossein,* the sons of Ali, and who are believed by the sect of Sheeas to be the true successors of the Prophet.

This festival ought in strictness to be celebrated by the Sheeas only, the Soonees taking no part in it. But in practice it is celebrated by Sheeas and Soonees alike, the object for which it was instituted having faded away from the minds of the mass of the people. Not only is it celebrated by all classes of Mahomedans, but many Hindoos sympathize with it, and either take part in it, or look on, admiring the showy spectacle.

One part of the festival, as celebrated in Bengal, consists of a public procession of elephants and camels walking in state, and followed by an immense crowd. The road is sometimes completely blocked up by the cavalcade. The figure of a camel, cut in wood, is carried in procession, to represent the animal on

of a crowded fair in Europe, and presents an immense concourse of people, an endless variety of rich costume, and an infinite diversity of picturesque accompaniment, a most lively and splendid scene."

* These names are variously written. We meet with the forms Hasan and Hosain, Haseyn and Hoseyn, Hassein and Hoossein, &c. Orme writes the words Hassein and Jassein.

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which one of the brothers fled; and a silver hand, to represent the hand of the other brother which was cut off. A figure of Borak, or the flying steed of the Prophet, on which he ascended to heaven, is also not unfrequently exhibited.

On the last day of the festival these figures, in Hindoo fashion, are thrown into a tank, and the wreck may be seen floating on the surface for many days after. In the evening there is an imposing religious service in the mosques. On one of these occasions I was admitted to one of the mosques, the Imambara at Chinsurah, and shall not soon forget what I saw. There was a great concourse of people assembled (males only), all apparently devout and attentive. Several moulvies went up by turns to a kind of platform or pulpit, from which they read passages from the Koran in Arabic, and briefly addressed the people. The addresses were very short, not more than a few minutes in length, but they appeared to be very effective. You heard every now and then unmistakable sounds of sobbing among the audience. I was never more surprised in my life. But, on listening attentively, it struck me that the sounds, though sufficiently loud, had not the real ring of grief; and I afterwards found that those who sobbed, were hired for the purpose. They acted their part very well indeed. But the most striking part of the whole was to come. Towards the end of the performance, a black coffin was brought in, and carried in procession along the passages. It produced a great

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impression, and the sobbing was louder than ever. But you might also see sceptical glances flashing from the eyes of the more intelligent moulvies, who smiled contemptuously at this appeal to the ignorance of the audience.

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CHAPTER VII.

Marriage Customs — Marriage Ceremony—Polygamy—Koolin Brahmins—Hindoo Widows.

AMONG the natives of India it is considered an indispensable duty to enter into the married state. In almost every instance the bride is betrothed at a very early age. There is some difference in this respect in different parts of the country, but in all it is early. In Bengal the bride ought to be affianced before the age of ten years, and even eight years old is not considered too young. The native almanacs give eight, nine, or ten as the most suitable age. If a daughter is not betrothed at the age of ten, the parent is considered regardless of the happiness of his child. In the northern provinces of India, the betrothal usually takes place a little later, but still at a period which, according to our ideas, would be deemed very premature.*

In choosing a wife, the sentiment of love scarcely enters as an element in the transaction. It is not usual

* Buchanan, when engaged in his statistical inquiries in the districts north of Bengal, found that all persons, male and female, were married before the age of fifteen; and, so far as he could discover, an unmarried young person of the age of twenty, was a phenomenon of which no one had ever heard.

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for the young people even to see each other until the knot is tied. The whole affair is managed by the parents, assisted by a female agent or professional matchmaker, who acts as a medium of communication between the parties. In fact, all the preliminaries are arranged by these professional agents. Pedigree or caste is one of the points to be carefully considered. The horoscopes of the young people must be consulted and compared. If everything is found satisfactory, if the stars are favourable, then, and not till then, the parents of the youthful couple come to an understanding.

It is looked upon as derogatory to marry into a family less honourable than one's own. When inequality exists in this respect, the balance is sometimes nicely adjusted by the payment of a sum of money. There is a tribe of high caste Brahmins (the Koolins) who turn this prejudice to good account. They marry into families of inferior rank, and receive a sum of money for the sacrifice they make, and as a solace to their wounded pride. As they are not restricted to one wife, but may marry an unlimited number, it may, in the hands of a Brahmin of prudence and discretion, turn out a very profitable transaction. A low caste man who is at the same time wealthy, is sometimes willing to give a large sum for the honour of having his family connected by marriage with a high caste husband.

The Hindoo marriage ceremony has been frequently described. An accurate description of it will be found

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in Colebrook's Essays, to which I refer the reader for all needful information.*

* What is considered the most essential part of the ceremony, is for the bride to take seven steps, or for the bride and bridegroom, hand in hand, to step successively into seven circles drawn on the floor. When the seventh step is taken the marriage is considered complete and irrevocable. With reference to this part of the marriage rite, Colebrook says, "The next ceremony is the bride's stepping seven steps. It is the most material of all the nuptial rites; for the marriage is complete and irrevocable as soon as she has taken the seventh step, and no sooner."

Allusions to this custom are found in ancient Hindoo books. Thus, in the Mahabarat, the following apology is put into the mouth of one who had played the part of young Lochinvar: "The marriage ceremonial is not complete till the seventh step is taken, and this step had not been taken when I seized the damsel."

One of the forms usual at a Hindoo marriage is for the hands of the bride and bridegroom to be tied together with a blade of the sweet-scented *cusa* grass. Another part of the ceremony is for the bride's father to tie together the skirts of their robes, accompanying this act with the admonition that they must be ever united "in duty, fortune, and love."

It will, I think, be admitted that these forms are interesting and appropriate. Nor is that part of the ceremony less so where the bridegroom repeats the words, "May that heart which is yours become my heart, and that heart which is mine become thy heart."

We read in books of certain customs which appear to be now obsolete or nearly so. One of these is as follows. After it has been settled that the marriage is to take place, the bridegroom is described as visiting the house of the father-in-law to sue for his bride. On this occasion there is a prescribed form of hospitality. A cow is brought in to be killed. The suitor steps forward and intercedes for her life, and his request is at once complied with.

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Marriages in India are usually attended with heavy expense. It is the custom of the country and pervades all ranks. A native who in other respects is saving and parsimonious, will grudge no outlay at the celebration of a son's or a daughter's wedding. Entertainments are given on a large scale, lasting sometimes eight or nine days, during which there is a constant round of visits and feasting. The Brahmins must be propitiated with presents. Add to this the procession, when the bride is taken home, and at which no expense is spared.

These expenses, according to Hindoo ideas, are unavoidable. The father must open his hand liberally, or appear to disadvantage in the eyes of his neighbours. In the case of wealthy families, several lacs of rupees are often spent on such occasions.*

In some parts of India, as in the northern provinces, it is usual for the bride, after the betrothal, to remain for some years at her father's house. But in Bengal, she is immediately taken to the house of the bridegroom's

* According to Buchanan, the wedding of a poor kaist, one of the higher castes of Bengal, costs, at least, 150 rupees. A common mechanic of good caste will spend eighty rupees, and even a malee, or common gardener, never spends less than seventeen rupees on the occasion of a marriage. He states that the ordinary outlay attending the marriage of a poor Koolin Brahmin is never less than 300 rupees. I have no reason to think that these statements are much, if at all, exaggerated.

At the same time one is not bound to believe as literally true what an ingenious writer states, that a certain rajah spent a lac of rupees in celebrating the marriage of two monkeys.

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family, and she continues to reside permanently there as her future home.

The procession of the bride and her retinue to the house of the bridegroom is usually conducted with great ceremony. The bride, seated in a palankeen, is carried in state, with music playing and torches burning.*

In India parents have a preference for male children. I have often heard it said that among the common people of Bengal, the midwife gets a rupee for her services when the offspring is a boy, and only half a rupee when it is a girl.†

Nor need we wonder at this decided preference for male offspring. It is based partly upon religious ideas peculiar to the Hindoos, as, for example, the belief that

* Captain Alexander Hamilton, referring particularly to Surat, says: "The marriages of the Gentiles in India are celebrated with much pomp. They begin in the forenoon to send a long train of people with covered dishes, or baskets, on their heads, with presents from the bridegroom to the bride, and before the presents march hautboys, drums and trumpets. After the presents march some female slaves for the bride and bridegroom's use. After the slaves comes an empty palankeen, to transport the bride from her house to her husband's. At night the bride and bridegroom are carried in state through the town, with torchlight and music before them, and fireworks are played off as they pass in the streets, and the parents of the married couple send presents to their friends."

† Ward, the missionary, states that one Hindoo woman will sometimes say to another, "Has your daughter-in-law any children?" To which the other replies plaintively, "No, nothing but a girl.'

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certain ceremonies affecting the peace of the soul after death can only be fitly performed by a son, or a son's son. The proper person to perform the funeral obsequies on the death of a parent, is a son, or son's son. Accordingly, the Hindoo shasters magnify the importance of male offspring, as where it is said, "By a son a man obtains victory over all people; by a son's son he enjoys immortality; and by a son's son's son, he reaches the solar abodes." By the laws of Menu, a wife "who bears only daughters" may, after a certain number of years, be *superseded*, that is, in plain terms, divorced.

In Bengal a male child has generally three names. The first and second are very often the names of particular deities, or heavenly bodies, and the third is the family name. Take, for example, the name Krishna Chunder Dutt. Here Krishna is the name of a deity, Chunder signifies the moon, and Dutt is the family name.

Though the sentiment of love does not usually enter as an element in the marriage compact, the Hindoos are not without their own ideas of personal charms. They have ideas of their own as to what constitutes female beauty. Their shasters contain minute directions as to the qualities to be sought in choosing a wife. Among other qualifications, the choice should fall upon one "who walks gracefully—like a young elephant." In one of the Poorans it is said of a young lady, who is described as a model of

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beauty, that "her gait was like that of a drunken elephant, or a goose." *

The negative qualities are still more copiously dwelt upon. Among other restrictions, it is said that a prudent man will not marry a woman "who has a beard," or one who has "hairy legs," or "thick ankles," or one who speaks with a "shrill voice," or one who "croaks like a raven." Again, it is said that a prudent man will not marry a woman "whose eyebrows meet," or one "whose teeth are apart and resemble tusks."

A writer, justly esteemed for his accuracy, states that the Tartar countenance is more admired by the Hindoos than the regular Hindoo features.† This may be so in some parts of India, where the influence of the Moguls was most felt, as in the Upper Provinces, and among a portion of the Mahomedan population.

* See Wilson's Vishnoo Pooran. It is generally said that fatness is considered a recommendation by Hindoo husbands. But it would appear there are exceptions to this, as to other rules. We read of a Hindoo lady who won the heart of the notorious Surajah Dowlah, that she was of the most delicate form, "and weighed only sixty-four pounds."

As regards males (and we may infer that the same holds good of females), I believe there is no doubt that the Hindoos regard fatness with favour and respect, if not with affection. It is considered a sign that a man is in easy circumstances. I have heard of a native artist, who, in drawing a picture of an English judge and the native officers sitting in court, drew them all enormously fat. When asked the reason, he said it was to show how rich they were.

† See Elphinstone's History of India.

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But I have no reason to think that this standard has ever been generally accepted by the Hindoos of Bengal, or of the southern provinces.

There may be some doubt whether the natives of India consider a fair complexion the most beautiful. It is not impossible that in the remoter districts, where the genuine Hindoo taste remains unchanged, a dark and even a black complexion may be regarded as the most natural and beautiful. There are, however, facts which bear the other way, and which appear to indicate that a fair complexion must be considered as entitled to the preference. Those Hindoos who are of the highest caste (the Brahmins and Rajpoots) are generally fairer than the rest of their countrymen. It is also an obvious fact that, among all castes, the wealthier classes, who are least exposed to the weather, are generally of a fairer complexion than the labouring classes. A fair complexion thus comes to be associated in the mind with rank, wealth, and ease. Some weight is also due to the circumstance that for many centuries the dominant races in India have been the white-faced men of the West.*

* In order to heighten or improve their complexion, it is usual for Hindoo ladies to paint their cheeks of a pale yellow or saffron colour—a fashion which is also followed by some of their sisters lower in the scale. This goes so far to prove that in the present day a somewhat fair complexion is most appreciated.

I do not know that anything bearing one way or the other can be gathered from the descriptions we have of the personal appearance of Hindoo deities. Some of the most popular

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Every one is aware that polygamy is sanctioned by the laws and usages of the Hindoos.* But do not let us run away with the idea that in practice this custom is at all common. When we speak of polygamy as one of the institutions of India, we are apt to suppose that it pervades all ranks, and that every Hindoo man has a plurality of wives. A little reflection will show the absurdity of this notion. In the first place, where are the wives to come from? From the very necessity of the case, from the universal law of nature extending to all climes, that nearly the same number of males as of females are born into the world, the privilege of having a plurality of wives

Hindoo deities are represented as jet black. Krishna is described as black. The very name has this meaning. This favourite deity is described as of the complexion of a cloud, and we find such expressions applied to him as "dark as the leaf of the full-blown lotus."

On the other hand, Rama, the brother of Krishna, is described as of a fair complexion. In the Vishnoo Pooran he is said to be "as fair as the jasmin, as the moon, as the fibres of the lotus stem;" and again, "white as a jasmin, a swan, or the moon." While Vishnoo is described as of a dark complexion, Sheeva is always painted white, and is sometimes designated *Sweta*, or the *White*.

* The Hindoo laws permit polygamy, but only, as it would seem, in exceptional cases. It is lawful for Hindoos to have more wives than one, though, in point of fact, they seldom have more than one.

The code of Menu does not appear to countenance polygamy to anything like the extent that is generally supposed. It says "a barren wife may be superseded *in the eighth year*." It is added, however (and this opens a wide door), that a wife "who speaks unkindly" may be "superseded" at any time.

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must be restricted to a very few of the lords of creation.*

Another consideration is the expense of maintaining the wives. This difficulty was well illustrated lately in one of the courts of justice here. A native belonging to one of the Hill tribes appeared before a European magistrate. The magistrate is reported to have asked him what were the names of his wives; to which he replied, "We never mention the names of our wives." The magistrate then asked, "Do you keep more than one wife?" The native replied, "We can scarcely feed one, why should we keep more?"

In point of fact, the privilege of having a plurality of wives is restricted to a few—to those only of ample means, who constitute but a small part of the community.

There is, as I have already observed, a certain class of highly privileged Brahmins to whom great latitude is allowed in this respect. These are the Koolin Brahmins, the descendants of certain illustrious families who settled in Bengal several centuries ago. It is stated, on what is generally believed to be good authority, that some Koolins marry as many as fifty wives; and instances have been known in which even that number has been exceeded. Wealthy men of low caste are ambitious of the honour of forming these

* Some writers have hazarded the opinion (for which, however, there does not appear to be the least foundation), that in tropical countries, the number of females born annually greatly exceeds that of the males.—See Raynall's East Indies.

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alliances, as a means of elevating their families in the social scale.

The Koolin often receives a dowry along with each wife. He is not put to the expense of "feeding" them. The wives remain at their father's house, while the husband travels about, and pays a visit now to one and now to another.

This is undoubtedly one of the most objectionable, one of the most hideous, of Hindoo customs. A feeling seems to be growing up against it among the more intelligent portion of the community; and, as some writers assert, even those Brahmins themselves, who are not Koolins, complain of the monopoly.*

According to the prevailing belief among Europeans, the Hindoo widow is not permitted to marry again, however young she may be. And not only so, she is for the rest of her life, as it were, clothed in sackcloth and ashes, and made to feel in every possible way that all her joys in life are buried with her dead husband in the grave.

The idea of a Hindoo girl being left a widow while still a mere child, and being prohibited by the laws of the country from marrying again, cannot fail to arrest

* It is not necessary to describe in this place those peculiar marriage customs which prevail among certain tribes in the Himalayan districts, and among the Nairs of Malabar. They are confined to a small section of the community, and can by no means be regarded as characteristic of the Hindoo race. And even if they were more common than they are, they are so abhorrent to our manners, that the less said about them the better.

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attention, and painfully impress all whose feelings custom has not blunted. Accordingly, the subject has excited no little interest among our countrymen, both here and at home. This interest has communicated itself to young Bengal. Letters may frequently be seen in the newspapers, both English and native, from young Hindoo reformers, urging their countrymen to strike off the fetters which keep their females in chains. At one time there is much talk about an Association of Enlightened Hindoos, to be called "The Hindoo Widow Remarrying Club." At another time we read glowing accounts of wealthy natives who have offered a reward of ten thousand, or even a lac of rupees, to the first Hindoo who shall have the moral courage to marry a Hindoo widow. One cannot help feeling, sometimes, that the cry has a hollow ring, and that there is much in the representations made which the state of the case does not fully justify.

What, then, is the actual state of the case? The prohibition, so far as I can learn, is confined to women of the Brahminical caste. And even as regards them, the shasters appear to give no certain sound. While some authorities declare that, according to the letter of the law, widows must not marry again, on the other hand, we read of cases in which the most learned pundits, on being consulted, have given a different interpretation.

This at least seems certain, that whatever may be the case among the higher castes, among all the others, who compose the great bulk of the population,

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the restriction is not absolute. I might even go the length of saying, that not only among some tribes of Hindoos are widows permitted to marry again, but that the same liberty is allowed among all the ordinary castes throughout the country. Perhaps we shall not be far from the truth in saying that the restriction, where it exists, has become very much a matter of caste, and that in marriage, as in food, there is an affectation of purity among the higher castes which has no place among the people at large.*

* Buchanan declares emphatically, that among three-fourths of the Hindoos, young widows are allowed to enter into a kind of marriage, which, among themselves, is regarded as indissoluble, and which the laws and customs of the country fully recognize.

I cannot but feel that authorities of great weight differ on this point. Professor Wilson says that a Hindoo widow must never again think of the married state, that her head is shaved, that she must abstain from aromatics, and take only one meal a day. On the other hand, Buchanan (an accurate observer, who, if he knew less of the literature of the Hindoos than Professor Wilson, probably knew more of their living manners and customs, and who was by no means inclined to extenuate any defects in them) repeatedly affirms that, as regards all the inferior castes, widows may be taken in marriage consistently with the manners and customs of the country; and that in some districts, this is permitted even to the higher castes.

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CHAPTER VIII.

Superstitious Customs—Ordeals.

IN a former chapter, some allusion was made to the superstitious notions that prevail in India. There are certain customs founded upon these superstitious notions, some of which will now be noticed.

On commencing a child's education, the Hindoos are careful to choose a lucky day on which to take the first lesson. It is commonly believed that if a child commences his education on any other than a propitious day, he will either die or turn out a dunce. Hindoo almanacs generally specify the lucky and unlucky days for commencing a child's education.*

Similarly there are lucky and unlucky days, lucky and unlucky hours, for commencing any undertaking. The time for commencing the building of a house,

* Swartz, the missionary, states in one of his letters, that the Rajah of Travancore gave him permission to open his school whenever he pleased; but added that his people told him *there would not be a good day all that month.* This superstition, says Swartz, keeps the people from sending their children to school till the lucky day arrives. There are even certain hours of the day which are regarded as peculiarly auspicious, and others in which it is unlucky to learn anything.

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or for setting out on a journey, is frequently delayed from day to day until the auspicious moment arrives.*

It is considered unlucky to reside in a house where any person has died. For this reason the Hindoos are unwilling to allow any one to die within doors. They generally carry persons who are at the point of death out of the house into the open air. In the neighbourhood of the Ganges, it is usual to carry the dying to the river side that they may expire on the banks of the sacred stream.

One may sometimes in Bengal see a cooking pot, streaked with white perpendicular lines, stuck up on a stick at the side of a house. This is one of the means adopted to counteract the effect of the spells and incantations of evil-disposed persons.

We may observe evidences of superstitious fear also in the precautions taken by Hindoo parents to ensure the safety of their children against witchcraft. It is generally believed that one expedient very efficacious for this purpose, is to conceal the real name of the child and call him by an assumed name. Especially efficacious is it, when the assumed name is expressive of humility.† With the same view they will some-

* Those Hindoos who live by crime, such as the Thugs, are not exempt from these prevalent superstitions. They are constantly on the look-out for signs and omens, and lucky days, and are guided by them in undertaking their unhallowed expeditions.

† It is usual among persons of rank to give a child two names. One of them is that by which he is generally known, the other is only known to the Gooroo. It is believed that if the child's real name be unknown, the spells and incantations of evil

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times clothe him in rags, however wealthy they may be. These artifices, it is presumed, will avert envy, and shield the child from harm. Sometimes a charm is hung round the child's neck as a protection.

Other traces of superstitious customs are found in the tests and ordeals invented for the detection of crime. Of these there are various kinds, of which only one or two may be noticed.

One of the most popular of these tests is called in Bengal *toola*, from a word which signifies *to weigh*. The accused is carefully weighed, after which the accusation in writing is pasted on his forehead. He then bathes, and after that is weighed again. If, after his bath, he proves heavier than before, he is pronounced innocent; but if lighter, his guilt is clearly established, and the verdict goes against him. This mode of determining the guilt or innocence of a party is said to be well known all over India.

Another popular test for determining the guilt of a suspected person, is to make him chew a small quantity

disposed persons can do no harm. When parents are afraid of losing their child, it is not unusual to give him a mean, name by which he is generally known, such as Teencowry (three cowries), or Paunchcowry (five cowries), while his real name remains a secret. The Hindoos do not like to hear people speak in praise of their children. When a child is praised, they are afraid some misfortune will befall it. You sometimes see ayas, or native female nurses in the service of European families, very much distressed when they hear anyone say "What a fine child!" they are afraid some evil will befall it.

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of dry rice. If the rice after being chewed is found moist and pulpy, the accused is pronounced innocent. But if it remains dry, he is pronounced guilty. Our domestic servants sometimes resort to this plan of detecting the thief, when a theft has been committed among themselves. A gooroo or other person of authority, conducts the ceremony. After arranging the servants in a row, he gives to each a small morsel of rice, which they chew with the utmost gravity. He then goes round with a leaf or plate in his hand, and collects the rice they have chewed, inspecting it with minute attention, and pronouncing his verdict according to the evidence.

Another popular test is to assemble the suspected persons together and rub their thumb-nails one by one. It is commonly believed that evidence of guilt will appear on the nail of the party who is really the criminal.

You will, perhaps, be inclined to think that these tests, however frivolous they may appear, contrast not unfavourably with the ordeals in vogue in Europe in the dark ages, when those who were accused had to prove their innocence by such means as handling a bar of red-hot iron, or walking over it with bare feet. Such ordeals have no meaning, and may be pronounced totally absurd. It is possible that some of those which I have mentioned as prevailing among the Hindoos, may have some foundation in the facts of science.

The Mahomedans of India sympathize with many of the superstitious notions of the Hindoos, such as the

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belief in omens and in witchcraft, astrology, magic, and the interpretation of dreams. With regard to astrology, it seems to be admitted that in this art they were rather the teachers than the taught. These superstitious notions exercise at the present time an influence over the minds of the people, of which Europeans can scarcely form any adequate idea—an influence proportioned to the dense ignorance of the masses of the population.*

The following is a specimen of the superstitious customs which prevail among the Mahomedans of India. The name of the Emperor Baber is well known to all who have read the history of India. Towards the end of this emperor's reign, his son fell ill, and was at the point of death. Baber, in accordance with a prevalent superstition, determined to devote himself for the life of his child. Agreeably to prescribed forms, he walked three times round the bed of the sick prince,

* These superstitious notions are allowed even to influence politics and the movement of armies. Thus we read that in the days of Shah Jehan, the siege of Candahar was commenced on a day and hour fixed by the astrologer.

In the time of Aurungzebe, a fierce insurrection broke out, originating with some Hindoo fanatics. The latter defeated a body of troops who were sent against them. It began to be suspected that these fanatics were possessed of magical powers, and that bullets had no effect upon them. So grave was the crisis, that Aurungzebe prepared to take the field in person; and as a preliminary step, he wrote with his own hand texts from the Koran, to be fixed on the Mahomedan standards with a view to break the spell. This artifice had the desired effect. —See Elphinstone's History.

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exclaiming—"I have borne it away! I have borne it away!" From that moment, it is related, the son began to recover, while Baber lost strength daily and died not long after.

It is a common device among the Mussulmans of the East, to open at random a page of the Koran and put the finger on a particular verse. The verse thus indicated is regarded as a divine direction.*

* The principle of fatalism may be cherished till it becomes a baneful superstition. It has been observed that the practice of inoculation is scarcely known among the Mahomedans of India. Their bigoted belief in the unalterable decrees of fate is said to be the reason.

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CHAPTER IX.

Forms of Politeness.

THE common form of salutation in India consists of a movement of the hand to the head. This is called a *salaam*. The right hand is raised gently, and simultaneously the head is bent slightly down.*

This is the common form of salutation among equals. When an inferior meets a superior (such as a domestic servant meeting his master) a sort of double salaam is the form used. Both hands are joined palm to palm, and raised twice or thrice to the forehead. This is a recognition of deeper respect than the other.† There is another form of salutation sometimes called *Dandawut*, in which the forehead is bent so as to touch the ground. This is the form of respect due to

* There is reason to think that the salaam is an indigenous form of salutation, which has been in use among the Hindoos from time immemorial, instead of being adopted from the Mahomedans, like some of their other customs.

† The European in India is sometimes horrified at seeing a native servant, who has been guilty of some indiscretion, prostrate himself on the ground, and touch his master's feet with his hands and forehead, refusing to rise till the latter gives him leave—which he generally does without loss of time.

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Brahmins and holy sages.* On approaching princes a still more reverential ceremonial is enjoined. The subject is required to prostrate himself on the ground. The rule prescribed by the Gentoo Code on such occasions, is to fall down "with eight members;" that is, with eight parts of the body touching the ground.†

When a native, either of high or low rank, enters a house, he takes off his slippers. It is a mark of respect, and corresponds to our custom of taking off the hat. No idea of degradation is associated with it.‡

* This name is sometimes applied to the form of salutation in which the hands are joined palm to palm, and raised twice or thrice to the forehead.

† There are other forms which appear to be also customary. We read that on one occasion the ambassadors from Persia to the court of Aurungzebe, made their reverence "in the Indian fashion," by putting their hands thrice on their heads, and as often letting them down to the ground.—See Bernier's Travels in the East.

Sir T. Rowe describes an Indian nobleman as doing homage to the Great Mogul by touching the ground three times with his head. On another occasion, he describes the men of quality as standing before the prince with their hands before them like slaves. This is a well known Eastern custom.

‡ This custom prevails among Hindoos and Mahomedans alike. In former times Europeans, when visiting natives of rank, were expected to conform to this custom. Swartz mentions it as a remarkable concession, that when he attended the court of Hyder Ali, he was not required to take off his shoes. He says, "When I was admitted to an audience, Hyder made me sit next to him on the floor, which was covered with the richest carpets, *and I was not required to take off my shoes*."

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On leaving the house, the slippers are put on again. It is considered a breach of etiquette for a native of rank to appear in public without his slippers.*

While the natives take off their slippers on entering a house, on the other hand they keep on the turban, reversing the usual custom of Europeans.

In former times a polite native never failed to put off his slippers on entering the house of a European. He never failed to show the same mark of respect to us as to his own countrymen. Time is bringing about great changes in this respect. At the Presidency towns especially, the custom of taking off the slippers is fast going out. It has been laid aside by nearly all who associate with Europoans, including most of those who have received an English education. In fact, by these classes, the slipper itself has been laid aside as an article of dress, and instead of it the boot or shoe is worn after the European fashion.

Those of us who have lived much at the Presidency towns have become quite reconciled to this change.

* On one occasion Aly Verdy Khan, the celebrated nabob, or viceroy of Bengal, had an interview with some Mahratta chiefs in his tent. A dispute arose, and in the scuffle which ensued, the nabob's attendants entreated him to retire and mount his elephant. But it happened that one of his slippers was missing, and he stoutly refused to leave the tent until it was found. One of his attendants said, "Is this a time to look for slippers?" He replied that he would not stir from the spot until the slipper was found, lest people should say, "Aly Verdy Khan was in such a hurry to get away, that he left his slipper behind him!"

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But old Indians who have resided chiefly in the interior, where the progress of innovation is slower, are disposed to view it with regret. In their eyes it is a proof that the natives are losing their respect for Europeans. In my opinion, this departure from ancient custom must go on and cannot stop. It follows the great law of fashion, which sways Hindoos and Europeans alike. The innovation has now, in the most public manner, received the sanction of the British Government. Those natives of rank who visit at Government House, are allowed to keep on their slippers in presence of the Governor General and the *élite* of the European society.

In the present day, among Hindoos who have come much in contact with the English, there is a partial intermingling of European with native forms of politeness. A Hindoo of rank to whom you pay your respects, will shake hands very cordially in the English fashion, and enter into frank and friendly conversation. This may be followed by your having wreaths of flowers put round your neck, and a shower of rose-water sprinkled over your person.

I have known instances in which a native, when calling upon a European, has entered the room with his turban in his hand, and when he sat down he would place it on his knee. Those who have been accustomed to the old style of native manners, are shocked at such violations of etiquette. In fact, the transition state which a portion of native society is

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passing through, gives rise to a sort of compromise between European and native manners, and to a style which is neither wholly the one nor the other. I cannot say that it is very pleasing. The blending of the two seems strange, and rather shocks our sense of propriety.

It is curious to see the difference in manners between a baboo of the old school, and one of the new. The latter is found to have broken off from the old style of manners, without having thoroughly mastered the new. To many minds he appears to disadvantage compared with his more orthodox countrymen. I have sometimes had a call from two brothers, of whom one clung to the old manners and the other had discarded them. The difference between them was very striking. The former followed recognized rules of politeness, while the other adopted a new style, which as yet has no fixed standard, and which puts him, as it were, in a false position. I must say, however, that there are numbers of well educated natives of the new school who are by no means deficient in politeness, and upon whom the change sits gracefully. Rajah Radhakant Deb is a most favourable specimen of this class. He speaks English like his mother tongue. He is courteous in his manners, and, in a word, is a highly intelligent and well bred native gentleman; one, moreover, who is neither indolent nor luxurious, but who is learned as well as polite, and takes an active interest in all public concerns. Bishop Heber, in his journal, mentions him, as a young

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man, in the most favourable terms. I have only known him in the prime of life, or rather approaching its decline. At the present moment he is still hale and vigorous, though he cannot be less than sixty years of age. Rajah Pertab Sing is another good specimen of the same class. He is a much younger man, and is modest and gentlemanly in his manners. I might give many other examples, such as Dwarkynath Tagore, who is well acquainted with European manners, and has all the tact and address of a finished courtier. Nor must I omit Pertabchunder Roy (son of the late distinguished Rammohun Roy), and my friend Ramgopal Ghose, both of whom have the frank and easy manners of well bred English gentlemen.

The natives of India, when paying visits, consider it a breach of etiquette to go away of their own accord. They expect to be dismissed, or rather to receive permission to go away. It may be partly from our ignorance of their customs, that Europeans sometimes complain of their long visits. A polite Hindoo will sit patiently for hours, without offering to go away, when all the time he is perhaps waiting till you give him leave and signify to him your desire to be left alone. In Hindoo families of rank, rosewater (or *attar* of roses) is brought in and presented to the visitor before leaving. Betel leaf is also sometimes presented, as well as sweetmeats and other refreshments.

There is a peculiar custom closely interwoven with

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Eastern manners (and like many others common to Hindoos and Mahomedans alike), which consists of propitiating the favour of the great by offerings of money. These offerings are called nuzzurs, or *salaamees*. According to Hindoo ideas, it would be considered rather rude to refuse these presents. They are often given on the occasion of formal visits, simply because it is the custom, and without any special motive. At other times they are given from a feeling of gratitude for past favours.

When the English first settled in Bengal, this system was in full force; but owing to the abuses attending it, it was sternly prohibited by orders from home. The good old times are past and gone. Only the ghost of the custom now remains. Of late years, it has been customary with English officers, when a nuzzur is presented, merely to touch it in token of acceptance. Even the form of presenting it is fast disappearing; but fruits, sweetmeats, and flowers, are still, in some parts of the country, sent by natives to Europeans of their acquaintance; and it would be considered discourteous to refuse them.*

* In a letter written by Sir E. Hyde East, chief justice of Calcutta, in the year 1816, describing a meeting of influential Hindoos held at his house, for the purpose of taking steps towards the establishment of an English college (which resulted in the foundation of the well known Hindoo college of Calcutta), he states that the usual mode of salutation was on this occasion departed from. "Instead of holding out money in his hand for me to touch, the chief pundit held out both his

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hands closed towards me; and as I offered him my hand, thinking he wished to shake hands in our English style, he disclosed a number of small sweet-scented flowers, which he emptied into my hand, saying that these were the flowers of literature which they were happy to present to me on this occasion."—See Mr. Bird's evidence before the Parliamentary Committee of 1853.

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CHAPTER X.

General Remarks—Change in Native Manners.

NOTWITHSTANDING the conservative character of the Hindoos, we find that in certain points considerable numbers of them are beginning to copy the manners and fashions of their European rulers. It has already been observed that, in some of their forms of politeness, there is a tendency apparent on the part of a portion of the community to approximate to the manners of Europeans. I will mention a few other instances in which a perceptible change has taken place.

And first, as regards dress. At all the Presidency towns, individuals among the wealthier classes have adopted, to some extent, the European style of dress. This tendency is exhibited in a very marked manner in the case of young natives who have received an English education; and perhaps still more in that of native converts to Christianity. Many of the latter appear to consider it a point of faith to adopt our style of dress along with our forms of worship.*

* This imitation of English manners is also a striking feature in the teachers of our Anglo-Indian schools. Not only do the native teachers wear shoes and stockings and pantaloons, and in

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In Calcutta and the neighbourhood, these tendencies have been more fully developed than elsewhere. One of the characteristics of the class known here as *young Bengal*, is a disposition to deviate from the customs of their ancestors in the article of dress. One of the first changes adopted by a member of this class is to put on a pair of white cotton stockings, and to exchange the native slipper for the English shoe. He then discards the loose *dhotee*, and puts on a pair of English trousers. At this stage he stops awhile before meditating any fresh innovation. After some interval he puts on an English shirt, which he sometimes wears hanging down to his knees, outside the pantaloons. In due course he assumes a waistcoat, and then a kind of surtout coat. The latter is made of cotton or silk for wearing in the warm weather, and of English broadcloth for the cold weather.

I do not know that the spirit of change is likely to stop here. Symptoms are apparent of a rebellion against the puggree, or turban. Already individual natives may be met with who have begun to wear a cloth cap of the European cut; but, as yet, no one who calls himself a Hindoo has ventured to wear the black beaver hat.*

some instances a shirt and a surtout coat. They are also inclined, contrary to native etiquette, to take off their turban in the schoolroom, in imitation of Europeans.

* The English umbrella is coming into very general use among young men educated at our schools, and among native clerks in public offices, and others who have much intercourse with Europeans. Among these classes it has almost entirely super-

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It may also be observed that the European carriage and gig have come into pretty general use among the wealthier class of natives in our large towns. This is more particularly the case at Calcutta. Among the crowd of carriages which may be seen on the strand of an evening, some of the handsomest belong to native baboos, who come out to take their evening drive — their *howakana* — like the European gentry. Many of the native merchants and clerks drive to their offices in neat four-wheeled carriages; and at some of the more important Anglo-Indian schools, where the children of the wealthy classes are educated, many of the pupils are conveyed there and back in English-built carriages. Thus, at the Hindoo college of Calcutta, the whole street in front of the building may be seen lined with handsome carriages, from end to end, every morning and evening.

So far has the influence of our manners extended, that even some of our amusements have become fashionable among the natives. Some surprise was lately felt by the European population of Calcutta,

seded the coarser native article. Here, too, the native Christians appear in the front rank, if they do not take the lead of all others. I remember two or three young native Christians at Madras, who took it very ill that they were not allowed to have English umbrellas instead of native ones. One year, at the setting in of the periodical rains, each had a coarse native umbrella provided for him by the missionary under whose charge they were placed. This raised a kind of mutiny among them. They could not conceal their deep disappointment, and immediately petitioned the society that they might be provided with English umbrellas.

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on reading in the newspapers an advertisement announcing horse-races at Burdwan, all the subscribers being natives, and the horses the property of natives.

It is more than suspected that, among other innovations, roast-beef finds its way to some Hindoo tables. Instances also occur in which habits of drinking are making inroads among that class of the population who are disposed to throw off the customs of their ancestors. This baneful practice is associated in their minds with liberal ideas.

It is quite customary for native gentlemen, who have received an English education, to write letters of invitation to one another in the English style, and expressed in the most formal and polite manner.

These innovations upon the ancient reign of Hindooism have not escaped the lash of Hindoo satirists. Not long ago, a correspondent of one of the native newspapers took notice of the spread of drunkenness among his countrymen. He added, ironically, that a native who does not drink is now beginning to be regarded as a *posoo*, or beast—as one who has no taste for a liberal education, or for the pleasures of civilized life. To such a length, says another, does modern politeness proceed, that it is usual to find on Hindoo tables notes written upon scented paper, in the following style:—"Baboo —— presents his compliments to Baboo ——, and requests the honour of his company to a bulbul fight at his house, on the —— instant."

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Other instances might be given of the disposition of the natives to adopt our manners and customs. Some literary and scientific associations have sprung up on the European model, with a fully organized committee, with a president and secretary and everything complete. The Asiatic Society, the School-Book Society, the Agricultural Society, and other associations, originating with Europeans, admit native members, some of whom take a lively interest in the proceedings. Sometimes, as in the case of the Agricultural Society of Calcutta, branch societies are formed in the interior, consisting entirely of native members, and which correspond with the parent society.

The influence of fashion is felt in other directions also. The natives are acquiring a taste for newspapers. It is calculated that, at the present moment, there are not less than a hundred and fifty native subscribers to English newspapers in Calcutta alone.* This may appear a small number for so great a city; but, besides this, a great number read Bengalee newspapers, some of which have from five hundred to a thousand subscribers.

The printing press is now busily at work in various parts of India. In many of the large towns, presses have been set up, at which all sorts of books are printed suitable for native taste. In addition to newspapers, there are published almanacs, histories, tales, songs, and a miscellaneous collection of school-books,

* This was written some years ago, and the number is probably now much greater.

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all in the native languages. Some of these are illustrated with woodcuts, though it must be confessed, so far as I have yet seen, the illustrations exhibit the art as still in its infancy.

While these things are so, we need not be surprised to find that some instances occur of native gentlemen encountering the dangers of the *black water* and visiting England. The example of Rammohun Roy has in later times been followed by others; and one or two instances have occurred of young Hindoos going to England to attend our colleges, and complete their education.*

* This adoption of English ideas is sometimes evinced in a rather ludicrous manner. A Hindoo servant will say that he must not do such a thing to-day, *because it is Sunday*. He is quick in observing when things ought not to be done.

Not only is there a disposition on the part of the natives to adopt our manners; there is, to some extent, a reaction the other way, and we sometimes show a disposition to adopt native customs. I do not know a more striking instance of this than in those bazaars for charitable purposes, which are now so popular with English ladies at home as well as here. The idea is evidently taken from a custom that prevailed in the Great Mogul's seraglio. Bernier gives a full account of it in his Travels; and he intimates that the great ladies of the court were "the she-merchants that keep the fair."

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CHAPTER XI.

Rank in India—Wealthy Families.

THERE is in India a kind of rank, recognized by the people of the country, with which we, as foreigners, have little sympathy, and which we can scarcely understand. It is founded upon caste, and is in a great measure independent of title, official position, wealth, or any of those distinctions which regulate rank among ourselves. Those who belong to the class of Brahmins, or of Kaists (a highly respectable caste in Bengal), inherit a certain social status derived from their caste alone, and which they do not forfeit even when reduced to abject poverty.*

But there is also in India a species of rank which closely resembles what we ourselves understand by that name.† There are rajahs (or native princes), who exer-

* In like manner, among the Mahomedans of India, there is a class of *ashrof*, or gentry, who pride themselves on their birth, and however poor they may be, refuse to degrade themselves by performing any menial service. Among these are the Saiuds, or reputed descendants of the Prophet; the Sheiks, or persons who boast of a pure Arabic extraction; and the Moguls, or descendants of the later Mahomedan conquerors of India.

† It may even be said that there is a titled nobility in India, using the word in a modified sense, and excluding the idea of

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cise a sort of regal dignity, and who enjoy influence and consideration in virtue of that position, whatever their caste may be. There are likewise, in all native states, prime ministers and governors of provinces, and military chiefs, all of whom have a certain rank derived from their official position. If these offices have been hereditary in the same family for two or three generations, there is so much the more lustre reflected from them on that account.

There is also a professional status similar to what prevails among ourselves. Gooroos (or family priests), of whatever caste, pundits (or doctors of law), and some others, have a certain professional status, independent of hereditary rank and every other consideration.

Moreover, in India as eleswhere, there is a certain social weight attaching to the possession of wealth.

In all these respects, there are social distinctions and what may, without impropriety, be called rank in India, independent of caste. Accordingly, we find that in a city like Calcutta, there are families who associate with one another, who give and accept invitations to each other's houses, drawn together not so much by the ties

hereditary succession. Titles of honour, such as Rajah, Nabob, and Bahadoor, are still conferred by the emperors of Delhi. The British Government retains the right of awarding such titles. In one instance only, as far as I am aware, has an English title been awarded to a native of India. The order of knighthood has been recently conferred by the Queen on Jamsetjee Jeejeebhoy, of Bombay, a Parsee gentleman of great munificence, whose contributions to public and benevolent objects are on a princely scale.

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of caste, as by equality of position in point of wealth, professional status, or the like.

In former times, the state of society in India favoured the rapid rise of adventurers to power. There was no hereditary nobility properly so called. The chief ruler of the state exercised, for the time being, the power of elevating whomsoever he pleased. Those who proved useful in maintaining his authority shared his fortunes. A favourite might be raised at once from the condition of a slave to the rank of a prime minister or commander-in-chief of the army. The frequent revolutions which agitated the empire offered a fair field and rare opportunities for energetic spirits. The strongest arm or the wisest head raised its possessor rapidly to rank and influence. But in such a state of society, if the elevation was rapid, the fall from power was frequently as sudden. Fortunes were suddenly made and as suddenly lost.

At present, under the British rule, all this is changed. A strong central government keeps all equally in subjection. The opportunities of rising are few, except by the slow means of commerce. There are no high political appointments open to the natives. The court and the camp are equally shut against native ambition.

Still, we are not to suppose that all, even now, are on the same level. Not to speak of the princes of Central India, and some others who are comparatively independent, even in our own provinces there are not a few who have the prestige of high rank, and some

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of whom trace their descent back to a period far earlier than the foundation of our power in India.

The landed property of the country is entirely in the hands of the natives. There are a great many extensive landed proprietors in Bengal, and the security from foreign invasion which our arms afford is favourable to the accumulation of wealth by this class.* Mercantile pursuits present another opening for rising to wealth, of which the natives are ready to take the fullest advantage.

Under the protection of our Government, which affords the utmost security to property, if not always from petty thieves, at least from the violent hands of men in power and from all external enemies, there is a large middle class growing up, who claim position and consideration on the ground of their wealth alone. It cannot, however, be said that there are as many gradations of rank, arising from this cause, here, as are found in the more settled countries of Europe, where social progress has made greater advances.†

* The name zemindar is generally applied to those proprietors who possess extensive estates. Some of the zemindars of Bengal have a yearly rent-roll of not less than twenty or thirty thousand pounds. In some districts the land is minutely subdivided among a number of small proprietors, who cultivate their own lands, and who rank no higher than peasant farmers.

† In England the different ranks shade into each other by insensible gradations. Here they are fewer in number and more sharply defined. The banker, the merchant, the artist, the farmer, the artizan, are separated by a more distinct line of demarcation. There are, of course, gradations of rank among the members of each of these classes, some being richer than

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There are constant fluctuations going on in native families. One rises and another falls. Sometimes extravagance and the desire to outshine others may be the cause. Sometimes prolonged litigation consumes their substance and brings them to ruin. But perhaps the cause which more than any other tends to bring wealthy families down, the cause most constant and uniform in its operation, is the Hindoo law of inheritance, which, on the death of the parent, divides the property equally among the children.

I have lately met with a very striking instance of the decline of native families, in the person of the Rajah of Kishnagur. One evening, about dusk, the present possessor of that title called at my house. He was unattended, and his apparel had certainly seen better days. He had all the appearance of a broken-down man, ruined both in purse and character. After conversing a little, he asked me, in broken English, to give him some brandy-and-water. After it was brought in, he ordered the servant out of the room. He did not wish to drink *brandy-pawnee* before the servant; and the reason he gave was rather curious. "These people," he said, "too ignorant. Not got education."

Of the wealthy natives of rank in Calcutta with whom I am acquainted, there is not one more remarkable than Rajah Radhakant Deb. Rajah Radhakant

others, or more skilful in their profession, and having a name and status accordingly. But, in general, those of the same profession are more nearly on a level than is the case in the more advanced countries of Europe.

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is very intelligent. He speaks English with perfect correctness. He is one of the finest specimens of the Hindoo gentleman anywhere to be met with. His grandfather, the founder of the family, was Clive's moonshee. He acted as interpreter to the great English general at that important period when the Mogul Empire was falling in pieces. There were, of course, pickings to be had in those days, and it is said that Clive's moonshee obtained a fair share. Be this as it may, his descendant, Rajah Radhakant, does the greatest honour to his rank, and is highly and most deservedly esteemed by all who know him.

There are many other native families of affluence in Calcutta, who have in recent times risen to wealth chiefly by mercantile means. Ashootosh Deb, the head of one of these families, is said to be worth a crore of rupees, or one million sterling. His father was banyan to one of the great English firms that flourished at the beginning of the present century. It is said that, by business talent and industry, he rose from a small salary of five rupees a month, to a fortune of a million sterling. Baboo Motteelall Seal affords a still more recent instance of mercantile success. There are other wealthy native families—such as the Sings, Tagores, and Dutts, whose names in Calcutta are familiar as household words.

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INDIAN CASTE.

CHAPTER I.

Ancient Theory of Indian Caste.

THE system of Caste is generally considered the most striking feature of Hindoo society. It strongly attracts the attention of every one who visits India. However long we may dwell in the East, it still remains a kind of mystery which we only imperfectly understand.

The ancient system of Hindoo Caste has been often described, and, in its main features, is familiar to all who have read (as who interested in India has not read?) the graphic pages of Dr. Robertson, of Mill the historian, and of Mountstuart Elphinstone. It is not my intention to go step by step over ground which has been so often trodden before, nor to recall to the reader's attention, in all their minuteness, the features of a system which I regard as all but defunct, and as having little or no influence on the present state of Hindoo society. I will only touch, and that briefly, upon a few leading points, which it is of importance to have clearly before the mind, in order to understand

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what it is my principal object to illustrate—the system of Hindoo Caste as it exists in the present day, and as it is still a living reality before our eyes.*

I need hardly say that the highest authority on the ancient system of Hindoo Caste, a system which is now almost wholly a thing of the past, is the book known to us as "Menu's Institutes of Hindoo Law."

According to this authority, the origin of Caste was simultaneous with that of the human race.† In that part of the code which treats of Caste, with such minuteness of detail, the Hindoo lawgiver places in the foreground the following account of the fourfold creation of man:—

"That the human race might be multiplied, he (Brahma) caused the Brahmin, the Khetree, the Bhaise, and the Soodra to proceed from his mouth, his arm, his thigh, and his foot."‡

It thus appears that, according to Hindoo belief,

* Of the ancient system of Caste, as described by Menu, we may say that, if it be not merely a theory and something nearly approaching a myth, it has really no place in Hindoo society as constituted and organized at the present time.

† The most generally accepted Hindoo account of the creation of man, is that which ascribes the origin of the different castes severally to the head, breast, thigh, and foot of Brahma.

‡ The same idea runs through other Hindoo writings of high antiquity (some of them supposed to be more ancient than Menu's code), and is very distinctly brought out in the following passage:—"The Brahmin was the mouth of Purusha; the Khetree, the arms; the Bhaise sprang from the thighs, and the Soodra from the feet of Bhagavan."—See Muir's Sanscrit Texts.

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there were from the beginning four castes, respectively named Brahmins, Khetrees, Bhaises and Soodras. Of these we will now speak in order.*

Of the four original castes, the Brahmins are represented as occupying the foremost place in dignity. It would be tedious to recount all the privileges reserved for this highly favoured class. Suffice it to point out a few of the more important.

According to the Laws of Menu, the religious education of the community was entrusted to the Brahmins. It was the prerogative of this caste to read and to interpret the Veds to the two castes next in rank to themselves, to conduct sacrifices, and to receive gifts for the performance of these duties.

According to the same authority, any injury done to a Brahmin was considered an offence of the greatest enormity. To take away the life of a Brahmin, was a crime not to be thought of.† Merely to overpower him

* Among the various modes of spelling these words one is at a loss which to choose. We meet with the following forms, not to speak of others:—Brahmin, Bramin, Brammon, Brahman, Brachman, Bracman; Khetree, Khettree, Khetry, Chehter, Chuttree, Cuttery, Cshatriya, Kshuttree, Kshutriya, Kshatriya, Quettery; Bhaise, Bhyse, Byse, Baias, Vaisya, Voishya, Vyse, Vaisy, Vaishyr; Soodra, Scydra, Sooder, Shoodur, Shuddery.

When a particular spelling has once become naturalized in our language, and more especially when it has become simplified in form, it is of importance to retain it, even where it can be shown to be not strictly in accordance with etymology and grammatical rules.

† One of the ordinances of Menu says, "Neither shall the king slay a Brahmin, though convicted of all possible crimes."

In various other ways the law threw its shield over this privi-

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in argument was a grave offence. A Soodra presuming to instruct a Brahmin, was liable to have hot oil poured into his mouth. If any one of the inferior castes presumed to sit on the same mat with a Brahmin, the law required that he should be branded with hot iron.

On the other hand, any mark of respect shown to a member of this privileged class was considered highly commendable. To feed the Brahmins, was a religious duty. To drink the water in which a Brahmin had washed his feet, was a passport to heaven.

Nor did their privileges end here. In various other respects it appears that to be born a Brahmin, was profitable for the life which now is as well as for that which is to come. If any common person found a treasure, it went to the king; but if a Brahmin found it, he kept it. The Brahmins were exempt from ordinary taxes, and the money-lender was required to take a lower rate of interest from him than from others.*

leged class. If a Brahmin happened to be betrayed into the commission of a crime, the law, as a general rule, passed a lenient sentence upon him. But an offence committed against the person of a Brahmin, had meted out to it a double measure of punishment.

* The law says, "A king, though dying with want, must not receive any tax from a Brahmin learned in the Veds."

The following extracts may give some idea of the exalted rank in ancient times assigned to the Brahmins. We read as follows:—"From the hostility of the Brahmins the Asuras were prostrated on the waters; by the favour of the Brahmins the gods inhabit heaven. The ether cannot be created; the mountain Himavat cannot be shaken; the Ganges cannot be

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According to the ancient Hindoo code, the Khetrees formed the second caste, and were next in rank to the Brahmins. They were designed to be the fighting men of the country, the military caste, and offices of command in the State were theirs by right. They possessed privileges of a political kind corresponding to

stemmed by a dam; the Brahmins cannot be overcome upon earth. The world cannot be governed in opposition to the Brahmins; for the mighty Brahmins are the deities even of the gods."

Nor is this a solitary passage. In another place are these words :—"Though Brahmins employ themselves in all sorts of mean occupations, they must invariably be honoured: for they are something transcendently divine." In another place we read, "Since the Brahmin sprang from the most excellent part, since he was the first-born, and since he possesses the Veds, he is by right the chief of the whole creation."

The life, however, prescribed for a Brahmin was, in some respects, one of self-denial and austerity. The young Brahmin was to pass his time in study, alternated with begging from door to door. The second stage of his life was to be spent in the discharge of social and domestic duties, in reading and expounding the Veds, in performing sacrifice, in bestowing alms, and accepting gifts. In the third stage of his life, the Brahmin was required to live in retirement, "without fire, without mansion, wholly silent, feeding on roots and fruit," and in observing all the outward forms of religion. In the fourth and last stage, he was released from mortifications and all external observances, and was to pass his time in religious meditation, till his soul left its tenement of clay and returned to its divine source.

O wise Brahmins (for we cannot doubt that they were themselves the framers of these rules), how well you knew human nature! We cannot but admire your wisdom and deep policy, in teaching your tribe to rely upon the religious sentiment, the strongest perhaps in our nature, as the best means of preserving your influence!

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those sacerdotal ones which were enjoyed by the Brahmins.

The Bhaises constituted the third great division of Hindoo society. Upon them devolved the duty of buying and selling, and of cultivating the land. This class ranked lower in the scale than either the Brahmins or the Khetrees.

According to Menu's code, the privilege of interpreting the Veds belonged to the Brahmins, and was confined to them alone; but the members of both the second and third castes were permitted to read the Veds, and to hear them read and expounded.

It was a characteristic privilege of the three higher castes that they were permitted to wear the *poita*, or sacred thread,—worn over the right shoulder and crossing the breast. The investiture of the male members of the family with this symbol was regarded as one of the most important rites of the Hindoo religion. It constituted what, in Hindoo phrase, was called the second birth, and those who were so invested were designated the twice-born.*

The Soodras constituted the fourth and lowest caste.

* By the laws of Menu, if the ceremony were delayed beyond the age of eighteen years in the case of a Brahmin, or a few years later in the case of one of either the second or third caste, they became outcasts. Until this investiture took place, the Hindoo youth was not permitted either to read the Veds, or to perform sacrifice.

Menu says, "Three castes—the Brahmins, the Khetrees, and the Bhaises—are twice born; the fourth, the Soodras, is once born."

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The curse pronounced upon the posterity of Ham took effect on the Soodras. It was the duty of the members of this caste to be servants to their brethren of the other three castes, and to undertake all the lower employments and offices of life.

Under the original constitution of Hindoo society, a Soodra was not permitted to read the Veds or even to hear them read. He wore no thread, and had none of the privileges of the twice-born.

Such, in few words, is an outline of the ancient scheme of Hindoo caste. But nothing can be farther from the truth than to suppose that it retains the same character in all its integrity up to the present time. Many and great changes have taken place in the progress of ages, as will clearly appear from the following chapters.

The system of caste seems never to have spread over the whole of India. Among the aboriginal tribes it is scarcely known. It never seems to have prevailed in full force in the south of India. There the term Soodra has always been an honourable designation. The Nairs of Malabar, who are the descendants of the ancient nobility, are Soodras. The Mahratta chiefs consider it an honour to be ranked as Soodras.

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CHAPTER II.

Modern System of Indian Caste—Popular Errors.

I DO not think I am much mistaken in supposing that the popular idea of modern Hindoo caste—an idea which prevails extensively among Europeans of the present day—embraces the following points:—

1. The Hindoos are still divided into four great classes or castes.*

2. The Brahmins and other Hindoos scrupulously abstain from eating animal food.†

* This is implied, and more or less explicitly expressed, in many of the strictures we meet with on Indian caste; though it cannot be said to be distinctly and consistently held by any well informed author.

Tennant, a popular writer on India, thus speaks of the religious system of the Hindoos:—"It has divided the whole community into four great classes, and stationed each class between certain walls of separation, which are impassable by the purest virtue, or by the most conspicuous merit." It must in justice be added that Tennant was aware that the Hindoo community was divided into more than four great classes. He elsewhere speaks of "the division of the whole society into four distinct castes or tribes, and a much greater number of inferior classifications."

† There is a general impression in Europe that the Hindoos

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3. Among the Hindoos all professions are strictly hereditary; and a Soodra, or man of low caste, can by

live exclusively on vegetable diet, and that it is a point of faith with them to abstain from animal food. This idea is countenanced by most of the earlier writers on India. Bernier, in his Travels in the East Indies, states that the "Gentiles," that is, the Hindoos, "never eat any meat," by which we are to understand flesh meat. In another place he says that all Hindoos believe in transmigration, "and in this that they must not kill or eat of any animal." In like manner Lord, the Surat chaplain, says, "It is certain that these Bramanes, or Banians, will not eat the flesh of living creatures that have either had life in them, or the likeness thereof. The reason why they would deter men from eating of flesh, is because they suppose there is a kind of metempsychosis, or passage of souls, from one creature to another; that the souls of men did enter into other living creatures, which should make men to abstain from tasting of them."

The same opinion is maintained by many of our most popular writers in more recent times, and from them it seems to have spread to the public at large. Raynall, for example, states distinctly that the Brahmins *eat nothing that has had life.* In like manner the Abbé Dubois states that the Brahmins, and the followers of Sheeva, scrupulously abstain from eating as food *anything that has contained the principle of life.* The ingenious Abbé, not content with a bare statement of the fact, finds a theory to account for it. There is reason to think, he says, that one reason for abstaining, in warm climates, from animal food, is that "the persons of those who eat it exhale a fetid odour perceptible for some time after the meal has been eaten." It is to be observed that the Abbé's remarks are meant to apply more particularly to the south of India, and to the worshippers of Sheeva. He admits that the worshippers of Vishnoo, in all parts of India, eat all kinds of flesh except beef. Tennant expressly says that the Brahmins "are prohibited from shedding blood, or eating anything that has had life."

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no exertion rise from the low position in which he was born.*

4. The Brahmins are the priests of the Hindoos; all Brahmins are priests, and none are priests but Brahmins.†

* Bernier, in his Travels in India, says, "The embroiderer maketh his son an embroiderer, the goldsmith maketh his son a goldsmith, and a physician in turn maketh his son a physician," &c.

Dr. Robertson, in his learned disquisition, after minutely describing the four original castes, says, "None of those can ever quit his own caste, or be admitted into another. The station of every individual is unalterably fixed; his destiny is irrevocable, and the walk of life is marked out, from which he must never deviate." He adds, "Nor is it between the four different tribes alone that such inseparable barriers are fixed; the members of each caste invariably adhere to the profession of their forefather. From generation to generation the same families have followed, and will always continue to follow, one uniform line of life."

Tennant says, "Every profession and art has a distinct rank and station assigned to it, from whence its professors can never emerge, nor can they change their hereditary employment for any other."

This opinion continues to be held by many educated men of the present day, who have made it their study to gain correct information on Indian subjects. Not long ago the late Mr. Wilson, in a speech delivered at Sheffield just before he left for India, expressed himself in the following terms:—"In India you see the people tied down by caste, and whatever their talents or exertions may be, they cannot rise."

† In our every day speech we use the word Brahmin in the sense of Hindoo priest. When we speak of *a feast to the Brahmins*, we mean a feast to the Hindoo priests. The phrase *gifts to the Brahmins*, means gifts to the Hindoo priests. Many of our

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5. To kill a Brahmin, or even to be remotely the cause of his death, is considered by all classes of Hindoos a crime of the deepest dye.*

6. The loss of caste involves inconceivable misery and suffering; and no one who has once forfeited his caste can ever, by any possibility, be restored to his place in society, but he is ever after an outcast and wanderer on the face of the earth.†

writers constantly use the word Brahmin in the sense of priest. They speak of a village Brahmin, as they speak of a village barber, or schoolmaster. Others, and among them some writers who are generally well informed, persist obstinately in the belief that the Hindoo priesthood continues to be supplied exclusively from the Brahminical caste.

* Tennant says, "The inviolability of a Brahmin is a fixed principle of the Hindoo system, apparently the corner-stone of that immense fabric. To deprive a Brahmin, therefore, of life, either by direct violence, or by causing his death in any mode, is a crime which admits of no expiation."

We are all familiar with the glowing picture drawn by the eloquent pen of Macaulay, in his Life of Warren Hastings, of the terror and dismay which seized the natives of Calcutta, when they saw the Brahmin Nuncomar put to death. "The moment that the drop fell, a howl of sorrow and despair arose from the innumerable spectators. Hundreds turned away their faces from the polluting sight, fled with loud wailings towards the Hooghley, and plunged into its holy waters, as if to purify themselves from the guilt of having looked on such a crime."

† Buchanan says that to a Hindoo loss of caste is "the most terrible of all punishments."

Tennant thus speaks of this misfortune:—"A Hindoo of any rank, by changing his religion, entails disgrace, not only on himself, but on all his relations, who lose their caste, and live in perpetual exclusion from society."

Again:—"The sentence of excommunication is here more

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I will now endeavour to show that on all these points great misconception prevails, and that the popular idea of caste, which has found acceptance even among many of those who are usually well informed, is very far indeed from being correct. And first, as regards the popular belief that the Hindoos of the present day are divided into four great classes or castes.

1. It is very generally believed, and is sometimes roundly stated, that the Hindoo population of India is still divided into four great castes.

It is quite true that the Hindoos are described by the most ancient authorities as originally so divided. But this classification, if it ever existed in fact, and

terrible than death; the person lying under it is deemed polluted, and if touched by another, it renders him also unclean, till he has washed and purified his person and his garments. The person, therefore, is not only excluded from society, but he cannot enter a temple, or be present at any religious ceremony; he is rendered incapable of any office, and the consequences of this terrible doom are supposed to extend to another life."

Sydney Smith, in his critique on Indian Missions in the *Edinburgh Review*, thus describes the awful consequences which follow the loss of caste. He says, "Everybody knows that the population of Hindostan is divided into castes, or classes of persons, and that when a man loses his caste, he is shunned by his wife, children, friends, and relations; that it is considered an abomination to lodge or eat with him; and that he is a wanderer and outcast on the face of the earth." In another part of the same article, he says that when a Hindoo loses caste "he is deserted by father, mother, wife, child, and kindred, and becomes instantly a solitary wanderer upon the earth; to touch him, to eat with him, is a pollution, producing a similar loss of caste; and the state of such a degraded man is worse than death itself."

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was ever anything but a mere theory, most certainly did not continue long. It appears that at the time when Menu compiled his code of laws, there were no fewer than sixty mixed classes, each of which had a distinct name; and besides these, thirty more mixed classes are mentioned, whose names are not given.

If we come down to the present times, we shall find that the number of minor castes is very great. In Bengal alone they amount to some hundreds. If we take in the whole of India, the number will be greatly increased. In every province particular castes are found which have no existence in others. Not seldom a new caste springs up in particular places from purely local causes, and who are unheard of beyond a very limited area.

If many more castes now exist than the original four prominently mentioned by Menu, it is equally certain that at least two of those four have long been extinct. There is no doubt that the second and third castes of the original four have no longer a distinct existence. They seem to have disappeared even before the Mahomedan conquest. Their very names in the present day sound strange to Hindoos themselves.*

2. The restrictions as to the use of animal food are not anything like so stringent as is generally supposed. In most parts of India animal food may be lawfully

* It is sometimes said, but I believe on insufficient authority, that the Rajpoots are lineally descended from the Khetrees, or military caste. The Nairs of Malabar are also sometimes said to be of the pure military caste.

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eaten even by the purest castes. The custom varies somewhat in different districts. It is observed that in Northern India more latitude is allowed in this respect than in the southern provinces.* Many of the Brahmins of Northern India, as well as the highest Rajpoots, eat goat's flesh, venison, wild fowl, and the flesh of the wild hog. The Mahrattas, it is well known, eat not only various kinds of game, but also goat's flesh and mutton.† The inhabitants of the Concan district are fond of the chase, which they follow not for the sport alone. They eat hares, quails, partridges, pigeons, and venison.

Every one who has travelled in the Madras Presidency must be familiar with the fact that the palankeen-bearers eat mutton very willingly. After travelling for a few days with the same set of bearers, they generally request you to give them a sheep. On its being received, they kill and eat it. In a few hours these supposed vegetarians swallow it all. The Pariahs of Southern India do not even abstain from beef.‡ In Bengal and Orissa goat's flesh is very generally eaten, and fish universally. In these districts the Brah-

* Speaking generally, it may be said, that in the colder provinces of India (including Northern India, the hilly districts of Western India, and the Mysore country), flesh meat is more eaten than in the warmer provinces.

† I have read somewhere that there are two places in the Mahratta country where the inhabitants eat beef, permitting the cattle to be openly killed and the meat sold.

‡ With regard to the mixed castes, it can scarcely be said that there is any restriction as to the use of animal food. There are certain low castes in all parts of India who devour even carrion.

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mins themselves openly eat fish and goat's flesh. I have often seen a Brahmin pass along the road with a fine fish in his hand, which he had purchased at the bazaar and was taking home to make a meal of. Very generally the worshippers of Vishnoo, a numerous sect in Bengal, eat the flesh of goats and of hogs, and also fish. In Bengal, great numbers of young kids are offered in sacrifice, and then eaten. Not unfrequently your syce rears a young kid, which he keeps in your stable and feeds with the grain provided for his master's horses. If you ask him what he is going to do with the fine fat kid, he will say, "Saheb, it is for god." By this he means that he is going to offer it in sacrifice, and then eat it.*

It is a mere prejudice, though one that has taken firm hold of the European mind, to suppose that the religion of the Hindoos absolutely proscribes the use of animal food.

According to the laws of Menu, most kinds of flesh meat are permitted even to Brahmins, provided it has previously been offered in sacrifice. The religious act consecrates what would otherwise be unlawful.† The monthly *Shrad* in honour of deceased ancestors,

* Bishop Heber arrived in India with his mind imbued with the prevailing misconceptions on this subject. He was soon undeceived. We find him, soon after his arrival, express his surprise that the Hindoos were "hardly less carnivorous than ourselves; that even the purest Brahmins eat mutton and venison; that fish was permitted to many castes, and pork to many others."

† By the laws of Menu, flesh meat is not only allowed but

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is to be performed with great care, and with "flesh meat in the best condition." The meat, it is expressly said, is to be eaten by Brahmins and others, after being sanctified by oblation. At the daily *Shrad* also, the eating of flesh meat is lawful.

Shore, in his Notes on Upper India, states that it is permitted to many castes to eat flesh meat that has been made *hullal*, that is, which has been consecrated by the repetition of a prayer over it, in the act of killing the animal. Buchanan states, in his Indian Statistics, that some Brahmins eat goat's flesh, both when offered in sacrifice and when publicly sold by the butcher, nor are they restricted from eating deer, hares, partridges, quails, wild ducks, pigeons, and fish. In his notes on the district of Purneah he observes that the pure tribes there eat pigeons which are offered in sacrifice, and also goats, deer, hare, porcupine, partridges, quails, tortoises, and fish, though they may not have been offered in sacrifice.

enjoined, provided it has been "hallowed for a sacrifice," or sanctified by *mantras*, or holy texts from the Veds, or offered to the manes of deceased persons. It is expressly added in one place that "no sin is committed by him who, having honoured the deities and the manes, eats flesh meat." These injunctions are addressed to the twice-born, including the three highest castes. Nor are we to suppose that the sacrifices by which animal food is hallowed, occur at rare intervals. The twice-born are commanded to make daily sacrifices to the gods and the manes of deceased ancestors. On these occasions flesh meat constitutes part of the offerings, which are to be eaten by the Brahmins, or officiating priests, by the master of the house and his family, and by twice-born guests.

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We have examples in very early times which show that the restrictions in regard to animal food were less stringent than is generally supposed. It is recorded in the Ramayan, that when Bharata was proceeding in search of his lost brother, a certain holy sage met him, and, by his powers of enchantment, caused the forest to yield contributions of venison, peacocks, partridges, mutton, the flesh of the wild hog, &c., for the refreshment of him and his followers.

It is not to be denied, however, that there are some Brahmins and others in India who rigidly abstain from eating animal food. I believe that such abstinence is almost universal, and is even an article of their creed, among the sect called the Jains.

3. There is no more inveterate idea in European minds with reference to caste, than that it ties a man down unalterably to the station of life in which he was born, and that the son must invariably follow the occupation of the father, without the possibility of ever deviating from it, or rising above it.

Now, nothing is more certain than that this state of things, if it ever existed, does not now exist in India. Caste, if it ever obliged a man at all hazards to follow the occupation of his father, has certainly now-a-days no such effect. In point of fact, almost every occupation that can be named is open to almost every man without exception, no matter what caste he belongs to.

Buchanan, in various parts of his voluminous and generally trustworthy reports, states that, in these

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days, no caste adheres strictly to its proper duties, and that, in order to procure a subsistence, numbers betake themselves to professions from which they are excluded by the strict letter of the law.

Colebrooke, who is acknowledged to be the highest authority on all matters not only of Hindoo literature but of Hindoo social life, says that, as regards secular occupations, there are now no restrictions.*

Nor is there in practice any obstacle to prevent a Soodra rising to the highest rank. The rajahs themselves, and the large zemindars throughout the country, are most of them Soodras.

The castes are sometimes in a general way coincident with trades. Many of them, according to our forms of expression, take their names from the ordinary trade or profession of the members, and that is sometimes hereditary. But, on the other hand, we often find men belonging to different castes engaged in the same trade or profession. And it is no less true that men who follow different trades (such as black-

* His exact words are these—"The limitations, far from being numerous, do, in fact, reserve only one peculiar profession, that of the Brahmin, which consists in teaching the Veds, and officiating at religious ceremonies."

Nor is even this profession either in the present day strictly reserved. As regards the Brahmins themselves, the restrictions are not, in practice, nearly so rigid as these words of Colebrooke might lead us to suppose. It is not consistent with existing facts to say that the profession of the Brahmins, using the word in its strict sense as denoting men of the Brahminical caste, consists in teaching the Veds, and officiating at religious ceremonies.

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smiths, carpenters, and masons) may belong to the same caste.

In investigating this subject some confusion is apt to arise from the vague and uncertain use of the word caste. If we ask a native in English what caste he belongs to, he will probably say the weaver caste, or the barber caste, and so on. He uses the word as he supposes we use it, to denote his trade or occupation. We are to remember that caste is not a Hindoo word, but that it is of European origin, and conveys to the mind of a native any sense we choose to put upon it.

No one, probably, has done more to propagate erroneous opinions on the subject of Hindoo caste than Tennant in his pleasing and entertaining work. When such a writer, who had spent many years in India, speaks of Hindoo caste as unchangeable in its nature, and represents every profession and art as strictly hereditary, what wonder if those who have never set foot in India should entertain the same erroneous opinions!

4. Max Müller says that it is an essential doctrine of the Brahmins that "religious education and the administration of sacrifices, as well as the receiving of rewards for these offices," belong exclusively to their own caste. He admits at the same time that there are passages in the most ancient Brahminical books, which appear to contradict this theory.

If the theory be contradicted by ancient Brahminical books, it is still more emphatically contradicted by

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modern practice. Now-a-days, the Brahmin is rarely the teacher and spiritual guide of the Hindoos. He rarely officiates as priest either in the temples or at private houses. Whatever may have been the case in times long gone by, nothing can be more certain than that, in the present day, Hindoo priests may be, and are, appointed from any caste without exception. Even in early times it would appear that priests were sometimes selected from other castes than the Brahminical. But now it is the rule. At the present time, Soodras officiate every day as priests. The priesthood is recruited mainly from the monastic orders, the members of which are chosen, without distinction, from the miscellaneous mass of the population. One cannot read Wilson's Hindoo Sects without being struck with this fact, and that caste, so far as a connection between the Brahmins and the priesthood is concerned, is wholly a thing of the past. The ancient distinctions in this respect are entirely obliterated. Some of the founders of Hindoo sects expressly denounce caste, which has come to be superseded in a great measure by special creeds, and by what may be called denominational distinctions.*

* This is admitted by every trustworthy authority of more recent times, from Colebrooke to Wilson and Muir. Colebrooke observes that those, of whatever caste, who pass into the several orders of devotion, are the regular clergy; that Brahmins who assist at religious ceremonies may be considered a kind of secular clergy; and that those Brahmins who follow entirely a worldly profession, belong to the laity.

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Not only is this the case, but it is equally a fact that, in the present day, the Brahmin engages in every occupation that can be named. In the great world of life and business, he enters the field on the same footing with others. In the general scramble for employment, no one competes more eagerly. He has to fight his way among the other classes, and if in the long run he rises above them, it must be by strength of arm, by superior skill or industry, and not by any divinity that hedges him round, or any advantages he possesses as belonging to a privileged order.

Even under the original constitution of Hindoo society, the Brahmins were not so much a priesthood' as a tribe. They bore some resemblance to the tribe of Levi among the Jews. A Brahmin, if he could not gain a livelihood by the exercise of his sacerdotal duties, was permitted to earn it in some other way.

It must be observed that considerable confusion has arisen here also from the vague and uncertain use of words. In the English tongue, the word Brahmin popularly signifies priest. There is scarcely a writer in our language who does not use the word in this sense, including even those writers who are fully aware

Professor Wilson observes that, in the strict sense of the phrase, the term "priesthood" was never applicable to the Brahmins; that in ancient times some of them acted as family priests, but that they never were, as a body, ministrant priests at temples. He adds, that many of them may act in that capacity, but not exclusively. In the present day, he says, they have almost ceased to be ghostly advisers.

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that few members of the Brahminical caste are now priests.*

There is authority for this use of the word in ancient Hindoo rituals. Brahmin is there used in the sense of priest, as where it is said that certain rites are to be performed by "Brahmins learned in the Veds."

In English works, the word Brahmin is sometimes used in the sense of a Hindoo logician. Thus, one of our modern writers on logic says, "The use of an abstract instead of a concrete term, is enough to disgust a Brahmin." † This is a still wider departure from the caste meaning of the word.

5. Closely connected with the belief that the Brahmin is a divinely appointed minister of religion, is that other idea that his person is still considered sacred, and that to kill a Brahmin or to be in any degree instrumental in causing his death, is a crime of the deepest dye. The law prohibiting a Brahmin from being, under any circumstances, put to death, has probably never been acted upon, and is certainly in the present day a dead letter.‡ Macaulay's picture of the

* Tennant, for example, constantly uses the word Brahmin in the sense of priest, though aware that few Brahmins (in the caste sense of the word) are priests, and that they are permitted to engage in other professions. Professor Wilson himself, who was still more fully aware of the distinction, more than once uses the word Brahmin as synonymous with priest.

† See Thomson's Laws of Thought.

‡ There is reason to doubt whether it ever was any more than a theory. Professor Wilson points out that in the oldest of the Hindoo dramas there is an instance of a Brahmin convicted of murder being put to death.

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scene at the death of Nuncomar is very vivid and picturesque, but it is also highly imaginative, and rests on a very slender basis of facts. This remarkable writer, with all his intelligence and unwearied research, was not entirely free from the common error of supposing that Indian caste still bears, in its leading features, a greater resemblance than is actually the case to the system as depicted in the pages of Menu.

In ancient times, to kill a Brahmin, and to kill a cow, were both denounced as crimes of the greatest enormity. But in both cases, a change has come over the spirit of the times in which we live. The Hindoos of the present day have in this, as in many other respects, insensibly drifted away from their ancient faith. The notion that to kill a Brahmin implies an unspeakable enormity of guilt, as depriving of life what is peculiarly sacred and almost divine, is now little more than a tradition.

It is true that to kill a Brahmin, using the word in the sense of a priest, or holy sage, would still be regarded as a crime of peculiar enormity. But this is no way wonderful. It arises from the same associations as would, among ourselves, stamp as a peculiarly heinous crime the taking away the life of a priest, and still more of a prelate or dignitary of the Church.

6. It is very generally supposed in Europe that loss of caste involves trials and privations indescribably awful. The idea in men's minds is, that a Hindoo who loses caste goes forth like Cain with a mark on his forehead, and becomes an outcast and a vagabond on

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the face of the earth. Some of our most popular writers have done much to give currency to this opinion.

Whether loss of caste ever carried with it, in practice, these terrible consequences may well be doubted. Certain it is, it no longer does so. In the present day, it amounts merely to this: the man who loses caste, places himself in a position which prevents those of his own circle from inviting him to entertainments, or being on a footing of intimacy with him. But in no sense does he become an alien or outcast, shunned by every one. The world at large transacts business with him much the same as ever. He walks abroad and meets with much the same treatment from the general public as before. If he wishes to be restored to the full privileges of his caste, all he has to do is to submit to a pecuniary fine, to evince his penitence by giving a feast to some of the leading members of his caste, or to condone the offence in some equally easy way.*

* The penalty, it has been observed, is often a small pecuniary fine, such as a private club might impose on its members for a violation of its rules. It is a common belief that to restore a man to caste who has once forfeited it, is a result which scarcely falls within the bounds of possibility. I cannot but feel that the facts of the case have been greatly exaggerated. An eloquent writer (Rev. Sydney Smith, in his Review of Indian Missions) observes that, in the year 1766, Lord Clive employed the whole influence of his government to restore a Hindoo to caste who had been involuntarily compelled to swallow a drop of cow broth. The principal men among the Brahmins were consulted. After examining their sacred books they declared that "as there

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Take the following case as an illustration. Some years ago, a native of Bengal, of respectable family, was convicted of forgery, and was transported to Sincapore for a certain period. During his banishment he necessarily lost caste. On his return, he was anxious to be restored to his former position in society. What did he do? He gave an entertainment to the principal men of his caste, and this had the desired effect. He was received by society on the same footing as before, and the stain attaching to him of loss of caste was completely removed.*

It is true that if a man has a powerful enemy, he may find it difficult to be reinstated in his former position. That enemy, animated by a spirit of revenge, may move heaven and earth to keep him out of society. He may annoy and wound his feelings,

was no precedent to justify the act, they found it impossible to restore the unfortunate man to his caste." That nothing might be wanting to the dramatic effect, it is added that the man soon after died of a broken heart!

* Elphinstone states that during a long residence in India, during which we know his eyes were open to all that was passing around him, he did not meet with a single instance of loss of caste being followed by any dreadful consequencees. He found that the giving of a feast, or the payment of a small fine, usually smoothed over every difficulty. Thus, for example, the irregularity involved in marrying a woman of a higher caste could be expiated by the payment of a small fine. As regards food, says Elphinstone, even in the Code there is no precise prohibition against the three higher castes eating with one another. They were only prohibited from eating with Soodras, and, even in this case, the sin could be expiated *by living on water-gruel for seven days.*—See Elphinstone's History of India.

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if he does not succeed in fixing a permanent stain on his character. But these are consequences which are not so much chargeable against caste, as against the general wickedness of human nature, and to which men in all countries and of all creeds are exposed, from the malice of their enemies.

We thus see that, in various respects, caste is a different thing from what we have been led to conceive. Most of those distinctions which are supposed to form its essence either no longer exist as living realities, or have become with the lapse of time greatly modified. That popular idea of caste which elevates the Brahmin above the rank of a mortal, and which confines each class rigidly to its own hereditary employment from generation to generation, presents a state of society very different indeed from what we see before our eyes in the present day.

Our ideas on the subject are derived chiefly from Mill's elaborate History of India and Dr. Robertson's learned Disquisition on Ancient India.* Both of these authors aim at describing this singular institution, rather as what it is in theory, and according to the original constitution of Hindoo society, than what it is in fact, and under existing circumstances.

Nothing can be clearer or better expressed than what Dr. Robertson says on the subject of caste. The

* Tennant's views, as expressed in his "Indian Recreations," seem to have had no inconsiderable influence in moulding the opinions of our countrymen on this as on some other Indian subjects.

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picture is brought out in full relief, and has a captivating charm of completeness. But it does not apply to the existing state of things. Both Mill and Robertson follow closely the original account of caste as given in Menu's Institutes of Hindoo Law, but which is wholly inapplicable to the present state of Hindoo society. Indeed, in some respects they make the rules more rigid, and draw the lines sharper than does Menu himself. The philosophical genius of these illustrious authors led them to generalize too far, and moulded their conceptions into a more symmetrical shape than the data before them altogether warranted.

It may be observed that the laws of Menu are not, in the present day, even in theory, the standard appealed to by the Hindoos themselves in matters of caste. There is another work called Jatimala, or the "Garland of Classes," which contains the rules to which the practice of the present day is expected to conform. These rules differ in many respects from those laid down by Menu. For example, they do not so rigidly restrict particular classes to particular occupations and professions. In fact, it may be said they leave almost every occupation open to every man, whatever be his caste.* According to the letter of the law,

* They permit a Brahmin, in case of need, to be a soldier, a farmer, or a shopkeeper, only forbidding him in the exercise of these professions to handle certain specified articles. In seasons of distress still greater latitude is allowed. At such times, a Brahmin may lawfully do menial service. On the other hand, a Soodra is expressly permitted to be a merchant or a farmer.

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as laid down in the Jatimala, there is only one profession specially reserved for a particular class. This is the sacerdotal profession, which is reserved for the Brahmins. But it is in theory only, for, as far as appears, there has always been, in practice, a deviation from this rule.

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CHAPTER III.

Modern System of Indian Caste—Leading Castes—Brahmins—Soodras—Pariahs.

The Hindoos of the present day may, on a wide classification, and without taking into account the numerous subdivisions, be divided into the three great groups of Brahmins, Soodras, and Pariahs. It may aid us in obtaining a clearer view of the present state of Hindoo caste if, in the first instance, we take a rapid survey or general view of each of these groups.

The Brahmins, it will be remembered, are not now, as a body, identified in any special manner with the sacerdotal profession. They flow over into almost all professions and occupations that can be named. Not only do they seek employment as priests and teachers, but also as soldiers, physicians, and artists. Nor is this all. A great many of them are farmers and merchants. Not a few of them are employed as domestic servants; and as in Germany you may find a count engaged in the undignified task of blacking your boots, so in India you may find a Brahmin employed in cooking your dinner.

There can be no doubt that the Brahmins of the

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present day, so far from being exclusively devoted to religious duties, freely compete with the other castes in a variety of secular pursuits, some of them of a menial kind. In this degenerate age rich Soodras frequently employ Brahmins in their families as cooks,* so entirely is the old system broken up. A poor Brahmin in the present day meets with no respect from his neighbours—now "none so poor to do him reverence." He must earn his bread by the sweat of his brow, just as if he were made of common clay. It is strictly true that under both the Mahomedan and British Governments he has been found competing freely for almost every situation which offered a sure means of earning a livelihood.†

* There may be some doubt whether this applies to a Brahmin by descent, or to one by profession; that is, whether it applies to a Brahmin in the strict caste sense of the word, or in that conventional sense in which the word signifies a Hindoo priest. I am inclined to think that it holds good in both cases. Tavernier says in one place, when describing a meal at one of the diamond mines which he visited in India, "this feast consists of nothing else but a plate of rice for each, which is distributed to them by the Brahmin, because every idolater is allowed to eat what comes from the hand of their priest."

† Buchanan states, in his Notes on Mysore and the Carnatic, that the Brahmins of the lower Carnatic follow secular professions. He says, "They almost entirely fill the different offices in the collection of the revenue and administration of justice; and they are exclusively employed as hircaras or messengers, and as the keepers of inns or choultries. Much of the land is rented by them; but, like the Jews, they seldom put their hand to actual labour, and *on no account will they hold the plough.*"

Every writer of any authority admits that in the present day

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At the present hour the great bulk of officiating Hindoo priests have no pretensions to be ranked, in point of caste, among the Brahmins. The Brahmins, being originally a privileged class, have increased and multiplied in the land. Their number is now so great that only a small proportion of them could obtain a subsistence by teaching the Veds and officiating at religious ceremonies. It has been calculated that in many parts of India not more than five per cent. of them are engaged in this manner. The remaining ninety-five per cent. are variously employed; many of them, as small farmers, in cultivating the land, where they put their hand to every kind of labour except, it is said, holding the plough; others, as merchants or shopkeepers; others, in the ranks of the army, performing the ordinary duties of the sepoy. Besides this, numbers of them are employed as clerks or writers in the public offices throughout the country. And, as has been said, not a few are employed as common servants, more particularly as cooks.*

most Brahmins are employed in secular pursuits. It is sometimes added that they only abstain from the most degraded employments. Tennant affirms that Brahmins "are not allowed to engage as menial servants."

* Professor Wilson, in his Notes on Mill's History of India, expresses himself to the following effect. He says, Mill's view of the Brahmins, though founded upon true texts, gives an erroneous impression. They are not like priests; they do not conduct public worship in temples, or present offerings to idols. A Brahmin who makes offerings to idols is held to be degraded, and unfit to be invited to religious feasts. In the early stages of Hindoo society, they conducted sacrifices for themselves and

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Have, then, the Brahmins of the present day so far fallen from their high estate as to have been stripped of all those privileges with which the ancient Hindoo law-giver invests them? According to Professor Wilson, the learned Brahmin still derives emolument and consideration from his connection with religion, as the interpreter of the works in which it is taught, though not partaking in "the profits of religious offices." A Pundit or learned Brahmin, though taking no part in the ceremonial of festivals and rites, is invited as a guest, and presents are made to him. He derives in this way subsistence for himself and his scholars.

There is reason to think that the love the Hindoos bear to learning is the sole cause of this distinction. The Brahmin of the present day, if I am not greatly mistaken, derives consideration and respect on account of his character and office, and not, even in the slightest degree, on account of his supposed descent from the head of Brahma, or of his having originally belonged to a sacerdotal tribe.*

the two next castes. In modern times they have, as a body, lost all claim to the character of a priesthood. They follow all kinds of secular occupations.

* Their influence, and the airs they are said to assume, are sometimes greatly exaggerated by English writers. Thus it is stated in a popular work on the Hindoos, published within the last few years, that "even the Brahmin who acts as cook in the kitchen of the Soodra, retains the pride of caste, and walks among his fellow-men with the air of a superior being, whose curse can shrivel up the gods themselves."—See "The Hindoos," in Library of Entertaining Knowledge.

Tennant says in one place that, whatever their occupation, the

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The Soodras have always been, and still are, a much more numerous class than the Brahmins. The more respectable portion of them are, in the present day, no way inferior to the Brahmins in wealth, nor do they fall below them as regards the consideration in which they are held by the community.

The principal branch of Soodras in Bengal are the Kaists, or writer caste.* The Kaists are the penmen of Bengal, and form a kind of official class who flourished greatly under the Mahomedan administration, and who are no less prosperous under our own. In former times they eagerly acquired Persian in order to qualify themselves for official employment; and now they are eagerly acquiring English with the same aim and purpose. They have prospered greatly under the Company's administration. Many of them have risen to the rank of rich Zemindars. Their official position gives them opportunities of which they are not slow in availing themselves. Their social status seems to have risen

Brahmins still receive a superior degree of respect from all other castes, "but not equal to that conferred on the actual priests." He also mentions (and he does not stand alone in this opinion), that a farmer of the Brahmin caste obtains his lease on easier terms than other castes; and other respectable castes on easier terms than Chumars. Is this the case? I have grave doubts if it be so at present. Certainly, in the bazaar, the Brahmin stands on precisely the same footing with others.

* A simpler form of the word is *Kaits*. There are various modes of spelling this, like most other Indian words. We frequently meet with it under the form Kaisths, Kayusts, Kayasthas, &c.

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progressively with their wealth and official influence. In Bengal they are considered, in point of rank, not a whit beneath the Brahmins, and the latter find them formidable rivals in the battle of life.

In the South of India, the Soodras generally occupy a more important position relatively to the other classes than they do in Bengal. They are there proud of the name, and look down upon the lower classes with no small contempt. The Mahrattas are a branch of the great family of Soodras. We sometimes hear it said that they are low caste men. But this phrase conveys an erroneous impression of their position. They are only to be considered as low caste men in the sense that all Soodras are such when estimated by the ancient standard of Brahminical pretension, instead of the living ideas of respectability now prevalent in the country.

The Soodras comprehend a great many branches or minor castes, some of which are considered vastly more respectable than others, arising very much from the same causes which render certain professions in Europe more honourable than others.

In addition to the Brahmins and Soodras, there is a third group, comprehending the lowest castes, and to which we may give the general name of Pariahs.*

* The word is sometimes written Pariars, or Parriars. The name is usually applied only to the low castes of the south of India. But there are corresponding classes in all parts of India.

Some say that the word *Pariah* is originally *Pahariah*, signifying an inhabitant of the hilly districts. If this idea be correct, it would imply that the Pariahs are the aborigines of the country, whom the tide of conquest drove to the more inaccessible

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They are generally said to be the offspring of mixed marriages between different castes, and comprehend the numerous mixed tribes who form the lowest strata of Hindoo society. It is frequently said that the Pariahs are the offspring of those unhallowed marriages where the father is of an inferior caste to the mother. The Jatimala, or modern text-book on Hindoo caste, enumerates forty-two mixed castes of this description. They are all regarded with abhorrence by the purer tribes. Among the most degraded of these are the Chandalas of Bengal, who are said to be descended from the Brahmin caste on the mother's side, and from a low Soodra on the father's side. In all these cases, the higher the mother's rank compared with that of the father, the more degraded is the offspring.

There is a marked line of demarcation between the other classes and the Pariahs. The latter are regarded with aversion by both Brahmins and Soodras. For a long time the admission of a Pariah into a missionary school had the effect of driving away the other pupils, and scattering them to the four winds of heaven. The more respectable castes obstinately refused to sit on the same bench, or even beneath the same roof, with the members of this degraded class.

The Chandalas of Bengal are a branch of the Pariahs.*

regions. Others dispute this derivation, and maintain that the name is to be traced to a Tamul word signifying a *drum;* the Pariahs belonging to that class who beat the drum at processions.

* It is to be observed that the same caste is frequently known by one name in one part of India, and by another name in

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Most of the sweepers and scavengers of Bengal belong to this class, and likewise those who are employed to burn the bodies of the dead, and to remove carcasses found floating in the river. The Chumar tribe, who work on hides and leather, belong to the same class.*

We are not to suppose that all Pariahs, any more than all Brahmins or Soodras, have the same social position. There are different degrees of degradation among them. Some of them, in some parts of the country, are regarded with such extreme abhorrence that they are not allowed to pass along the public road, or to come into the presence of the more respectable classes, or even to look at them.†

another. We may consider the words Pariah and Chandala as nearly synonymous, the former being more used in the south of India, and the latter in Bengal.

* The Chumar makes shoes, harness, &c. He is regarded as belonging to a very low caste.

Buchanan states that in the lower Carnatic the Brahmins chiefly cultivate their farms by means of slaves of the inferior castes, "called Sudra and Panchum Bundum." He describes the latter as the most hardy and laborious people of the country. He says, "The Panchum Bundum consist of four tribes; the Parriar, the Baluan, the Schecliar, and the Toti. The Schecliars dress hides; and from among the Toti is chosen a particular class of village officers," meaning that useful class commonly called scavengers.

† Buchanan, in his Notes on Mysore, takes notice of these miserable outcasts. He states that they inhabit the forests and hilly districts of Malabar, and that they dare not venture on the public road. When they perceive any one approaching, they are required to utter a loud yell, and make a wide circuit to let him pass.

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For a graphic, if somewhat exaggerated, account of the Pariahs of Southern India, see Raynall's East Indies.

The Abbé Dubois also treats of the subject, not without some touches of romance. In theory, he says, a Brahmin considers the air of a whole neighbourhood polluted by the approach of a Pariah.

An account of these degraded beings is also given by Captain Alexander Hamilton. See Pinkerton's Voyages and Travels, Vol. viii.

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CHAPTER IV.

Modern System of Indian Castes—Minor Castes—Past and Present.

I HAVE spoken of three leading groups, into which the whole Hindoo population may be divided; but, in fact, each of these groups comprehends a great number of subdivisions or minor castes. We are not to suppose that all Brahmins, or all Soodras, or all Pariahs, belong to one grade. There are various divisions, various castes, so to speak, among them, the members of each of which regard themselves as a distinct body, and who have customs peculiar to themselves. Let me enter a little more into detail, in order to bring out fully to view this important feature of Hindoo caste.

The Brahmins, as was natural, both from their position originally as a sacerdotal class, and from their being the highest in rank, have held together better than the other castes. But while there are still great numbers who call themselves by the name of Brahmins, it would be a mistake to suppose that they form one compact body. Though nominally one class, they are split into various subdivisions, which claim a different rank and status.

It is stated, on unquestionable authority, that the Brahmins of Bengal are descended from five Brahmin

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families who settled there in the tenth century of our era. About a century later these five families had branched off into more than a hundred and fifty families, whose relative status was fixed by a celebrated king who reigned at that period.* In the present day these families have distinct names, well known to themselves, which tend to keep up a distinction between them, and to stamp upon those to whom they are applied much of the character of distinct castes or clans. Colebrook enumerates a hundred and sixty-eight subdivisions of the Brahminical class in Bengal, among whom there are recognized distinctions of rank. Similarly in other parts of India, as, for example, the Deccan, there are various families of Brahmins who refuse to eat or associate with one another, and who have much of the family pride and exclusiveness characteristic of distinct castes.†

You may sometimes hear a native say that he is a Brahmin. But not unfrequently when you ask him to name his caste, he mentions the minor subdivision, or perhaps the trade or profession, to which he belongs.

It is the same with the Soodras. Though the general name of Soodra may be applied to all, they are subdivided into a number of minor castes. Even many

* See Colebrooke's Essays.

† Grant Duff states that there are no less than eight internal distinctions among the Mahratta Brahmins, each exhibiting a perceptible difference of character, and even of personal appearance.

Similarly, the Rajpoots are divided into a number of minor castes, the members of which refuse to intermarry.

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of the minor divisions are again subdivided. The Kaists of Bengal claim to be descended from certain families who emigrated to Bengal in the tenth century. They afterwards branched off into eighty-three families;* and the same king who adjusted the rank of the Brahmin families is said also to have adjusted their rank, and that of other classes besides. It is remarkable that in all these cases there are special names to designate each family. The talent of the Hindoos for subtle distinctions, and for inventing a precise nomenclature, is as apparent here as in their grammar and logic.

In Bengal, as has been observed, the leading branch of Soodras are the Kaists, who compose what we call the writer caste. Among the Hindoos generally, but more especially in some districts of the south of India, there is a prominent distinction among the Soodras with which most of us are familiar. There are what are called the right-hand and the left-hand Soodras, each group embracing a number of distinct trades or professions.†

* Colebrooke states that among the Kaists of Bengal eighty-three subdivisions can be traced.

† Buchanan states that in Mysore the division of the people into the right and left hand sides is more prominent than in other parts of India, "although among the Hindoos it is generally known." The tribes or castes forming the right-hand side are eighteen, among whom are certain traders or merchants, cultivators of the Soodra caste, oilmakers "who use one bullock in the mill," calico printers, tailors, shepherds, potters, washermen, palankeen-bearers, barbers, painters, and "the people called Parriars at Madras, who form the active part of the right-hand side."

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This subdivision into minor castes extends to the Pariahs, and I am not sure but it is carried quite as far among them as among either Brahmins or Soodras. The members of these subdivisions respectively look upon themselves as distinct from all others. They have separate customs, and there are various degrees of rank among them. The washermen Pariahs consider themselves as belonging to a higher grade than the scavenger Pariahs, and the priest Pariahs regard themselves as immeasurably higher than either.*

According to the same authority, the subdivisions which form the left-hand side are nine in number, and include carpenters, masons, blacksmiths, gold and silversmiths, oilmakers "who use two oxen in their mills," farmers, shoemakers, &c.

In reading Buchanan's Journey through Mysore and Canara, one is quite bewildered with the number of castes or tribes, and with the diversity of their customs. The great number of minor castes among the Hindoos was noticed by some of our early writers. Captain Alexander Hamilton says, "The Banyans" (a word he uses for Hindoos) "are most numerous in this city (Surat), and are either merchants, bankers, brokers, or penmen, as accountants, collectors, and surveyors, but few, or none, handicrafts, except tailors, and barbers. They have eighty-five different sects among them that do not eat with one another."

* It may still further illustrate this tendency, so apparent among the inhabitants of India, to split into subdivisions, if we mention the following fact. It has been observed that the Jains in the south of India are divided into castes, but that in Upper India they are not; but that the latter, nevertheless, are "tenacious of similar distinctions, and not only refuse to mix with other classes, but recognize a number of orders amongst themselves, between which no intermarriages can take place, and many of whom cannot eat together."—See Wilson's Hindoo Sects. It is not easy to perceive the distinction between such customs and those of caste.

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It is to be observed that no Hindoo is ashamed of his caste. It is rather a subject and ground of pride. The lowest inherit this feeling as much as the highest. There is even reason to think that in proportion as we descend in the scale the feeling in regard to caste customs becomes stronger.*

We often speak of the castes of India as corresponding to distinct trades. In this sense there is a weaver caste, a goldsmith caste, a barber caste, a washerman caste, and many more. It has been shrewdly observed, that as the Hindoos have castes for all trades, so they have castes for thieves, and that the principle of division of labour is found to have its advantages here as in other instances, the Hindoo thief being fully as expert as any of the same craft in other countries.

I do not deny that in India every distinct trade has a tendency to crystallize into something bearing a strong resemblance to caste. And yet I am by no means satisfied that we should speak of the two as coinciding with one another. To speak in this manner tends to confusion. That castes and trades are coincident seems

* According to Professor Wilson, the innumerable castes of the present day are partly the representatives of the ancient mixed castes, but, still more, distinctions unauthorizedly assumed by the people themselves. He adds: "The multiplication of castes in India is not the enactment of any code, though it may be remotely the effect: it is the work of the people, amongst the most degraded of whom prevails, not the shame, but the pride of caste. The lowest native is no outcast: he has an acknowledged place in society, he is the member of a class, and he is invariably more retentive of the distinction than those above him."

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to be rather an English than a Hindoo idea, and arises from a misconception of what caste really is. That such is the case may be illustrated by a distinction well known in India. We have here what are called the right-hand and the left-hand castes. They are both branches of the great Soodra caste. One of them comprehends within its membership no less than nine, and the other as many as eighteen distinct trades.*

Nothing is more common than to hear of the stereotyped system of caste, of its continuing the same from time immemorial as it now is, and of its admitting of no change. Many of our writers, including even those who are well informed on other subjects, are utterly mistaken in their views on this.† Let me briefly notice a few of the changes which have taken place.

The Brahmin no longer possesses the same privileges as are assigned to him by the code of Menu, nor does his condition of life at all resemble what is there described. The punishments decreed to those who insult a Brahmin are now completely obsolete. The life prescribed for a Brahmin, with its distinct duties, is now entirely a thing of the past.

* See Buchanan's Indian Statistics. One of the sides comprehends carpenters, masons, blacksmiths, tanners, shoemakers, &c. The other comprehends merchants, potters, washermen, palankeen-bearers, barbers, &c.

† The author of the Confessions of an English Opium-eater says, with reference to the antiquity of Hindoo institutions: "Even Englishmen, though not bred in any knowledge of such institutions, cannot but shudder at the mystic sublimity of castes that have flowed apart, and refused to mix, through such immemorial tracts of time."

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Again, Menu says,—"Let not a Brahmin dwell in a city governed by a Soodra." This prohibition is now completely a dead letter. If it were in force, the Brahmins could not live in India. Look at the Rajahs of India. A pure Khetree prince is nowhere to be found. With only one exception at most, all the Hindoo princes are Soodras.* It is well known that the Rajahs of the Mahratta Confederacy were Soodras. They rose to power without foreign aid, and with the full sympathy and consent of their countrymen of all ranks.

We have the testimony of Hindoo writers themselves, to prove that even in the earliest times caste was not so rigid a system as is generally supposed. It appears from the Institutes of Menu, that the confusion of castes had already begun when the code was compiled. In those early times Brahmins and the two higher classes had already intermarried with Soodras, giving rise to a number of mixed castes. Other families rose in the scale. It is related of Vishwamitra, the son of a Khetree, that, through his respect for the Brahmins, he "attained Brahminhood." It is recorded of the same person in another place, that he was a Brahmin Rishee and an expounder of the Veds, and that, though a Khetree, he "attained to Brahminhood, and was the founder of a Brahmin race." Nor is this a solitary example. Several instances occur in the Poorans, in

* The exception generally given is that of the Peshwa, a Brahmin. All the other Hindoo princes are Soodras.—See Rickard's India.

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which Brahmins and Khetrees are described as being descended from the same stock. It is related that from the son of "Manu" sprang a race of Khetrees, of whom it is said—"They attained Brahminhood on earth." Another son or grandson of "Manu" became a Bhaise. According to some authorities, he was degraded from the position of a Khetree to that of a Bhaise, because he married a woman of the latter caste. Two sons of this race, who were Bhaises, afterwards became Brahmins. These changes took place during what has been called the "Solar Dynasty" of Hindoo kings. During the Lunar Dynasty similar changes took place. Several instances are recorded in which Khetrees rose to the rank of Brahmins. It is related of a certain family, that, though descended from Khetrees, they assumed the status of Brahmins.*

Another very prominent change which has taken place, is that the four original castes no longer hold their ground as distinct classes of Hindoo society, but are inextricably confounded. Instead of four great castes, composing four distinct nations, as it were, divided from one another by sharp lines of demarcation, we have now an immense number of smaller castes, separated it is true by peculiar customs, but no longer divided *toto cælo* from one another, or tied down (except in a few extreme cases) to distinct professions.

In an especial manner it is to be observed that the Brahmins are no longer a distinct Sacerdotal class.

* See Muir's Hindoo Texts.

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The duty of interpreting Scripture, and of being the representative of God on earth, once monopolized by the Brahmins, has become more equally distributed among all classes of the community. Brahminical pride has thus been attacked in its citadel, and has received its death-blow.

Let us imagine the system of caste, in all its rigour as laid down by Menu, planted in any country. It would soon be felt to press as an intolerable burden, and society, if it had any spark of life left, would rise up in arms against it. The high pretensions of the Brahmins would not be tolerated by the other classes. In the eager competition for food, artificial barriers confining particular employments to particular families, could not stand for any length of time, and must necessarily be swept away.

With the progress of society, new trades and professions would inevitably spring up, tending to confound the original distinctions of caste.

Another prolific source of change would be found in intermarriages between the higher and lower castes, a tendency which no artificial barrier could resist. The offspring arising from these mixed marriages would take a position not exactly the same as that of either the father or mother, but somewhere between them, and, in the course of some centuries, the variety of mixed tribes arising from this cause would be great beyond calculation.

The code seems not to have contemplated such con-

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tingencies, which, however, could not fail in the long run to have an important influence in altering the whole system.

Some are of opinion that the system of caste, as described by Menu, exhibits a picture of Hindoo society which never had any existence in reality. This at least is certain, that, if it ever did exist, great changes took place centuries before the present time. These changes have gone on increasing with every succeeding age, until all resemblance between the present and the past has nearly disappeared. No one looking at the system of caste described by Menu, and comparing it with that spread out before his eyes in the present day, would be able to perceive much resemblance between them.*

* Mill admits, but only in a note, and in small print, that the outline he has given of Hindoo caste is not in harmony with the present practice. He admits that the ancient rules of caste are so adverse to the laws of human welfare that they never could have been observed strictly. At the same time, he is of opinion that the ancient institutions are "the model on which the present frame of Hindoo society has been formed."

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CHAPTER V.

Modern System of Indian Caste—Caste Prejudices variable and capricious.

THOUGH Hindoo caste is not in the present day what it was in ancient times, it still exists in a different form, and still exerts an amazing influence over Hindoo society. It is not easy, however, to describe exactly what it is in its distinctive features.

One peculiarity of caste, which greatly increases the difficulty of describing it, is that it varies in its character in different districts. Take it, for example, in its relation to food. In Bengal the people generally abstain from eating mutton. In some parts of the Upper Provinces there is no such restriction. In Bengal all classes without exception eat fish. In some parts of Northern India fish is rejected as an article of food. In some parts of India Hindoos of the highest rank do not scruple to ride in carriages drawn by oxen. In others, such a custom would be considered highly objectionable.

As regards some of the small peculiarities of caste, the people of the Southern Provinces are more strict than those of Northern India. But on one important point the inhabitants of Northern India are more scrupulous than those who live further south. I mean

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in the article of marriage. The Rajpoots, in particular, carry their caste prejudices in this respect to the greatest extreme. So jealous are they on the point of purity of blood, that the mother willingly consents to the death of her infant daughter, rather than that daughter in future years should run the risk of marrying beneath her station.*

It is possible that, in some instances, customs that at first sight appear capricious may be founded on grounds of reason. The inhabitants of some of the districts of the north-west of India reject the use of fish as an article of food. In some of these districts there is no water except what is procured from deep wells.† The inhabitants, in rejecting fish, seem to make a virtue of necessity. Where there is no water except what is drawn from deep wells, there can be no good fish; and the custom of abstaining from this article of food is founded upon a very intelligible reason. On the other hand, Bengal, which is intersected in every direction by large rivers, abounds in fish of the choicest

* It would appear, however, that political reasons may sometimes overrule their caste prejudices on this point. We read of Rajpoot families of the purest descent condescending to give their daughters in marriage to Mahomedan princes. The Emperor Jehangeer was married to a Rajpoot lady. It is said that the Oodeepore rajahs alone, of all the royal families of the north, refused such alliances. Nor was there any want of reciprocity on the other side. It is well known that the Mahratta princes, who were strict Hindoos, had no objection to marry Mahomedan wives.

† See Elphinstone's History of India, and his remarks on the district of Bikaneer.

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kind, and to abstain from fish here would require very considerable self-denial.

It is quite possible to conceive of cases in which a particular custom may arise in one part of the country where it is founded on reason, and may afterwards spread to other localities where, owing to a difference of circumstances, it may wear an appearance of caprice.

Another difficulty is of this kind. The rules of caste as affecting the same tribe are to some extent different even in the same neighbourhood. It sometimes happens that, among members of the same caste, what is unlawful in one place is lawful in another only a few miles distant.*

It may also be observed that the status of the same caste varies considerably in different districts. Accidental and merely local circumstances may give to a particular caste an importance in one district which it has not in others.†

* Buchanan, when speaking of the right and left hand castes in the neighbourhood of Seringapatam, states that at different places, though at no great distance, "there are considerable variations in the customs of the same tribe." This characteristic of caste cropped up among the native Christians of the south of India, among whom, as among the heathen, the rules of caste were variable, what was lawful in one place being unlawful in another.—See Life of Bishop Wilson.

† Buchanan observes that in Bengal, by a strange caprice, bankers and goldsmiths are excluded from the pure castes of Soodras, and blacksmiths and weavers are admitted; while in other districts this rule is reversed, and the goldsmith ranks higher than the blacksmith. He observes that, in the western part of the district of Purneah, the barber caste is considered among the lowest, while in the eastern part it stands very high.

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A change in the relative position of different castes is, within certain limits, continually going on. Nor is this to be wondered at, considering the manifold causes which affect so large a population as that of India. Buchanan, when travelling through Behar, examining with his usual inquisitiveness into the social condition of the people, found that in some instances the rank of the same caste rose and fell according to accidental circumstances. He particularly takes notice of certain families in the neighbourhood of Bhagulpore, who, from having adopted a pure life, had, within the memory of man, risen from the lowest dregs of the people to the highest rank of nobility.

Caste, in some of its manifestations, is of a very capricious nature.

A Hindoo of rank will not allow his child either to eat or sleep in the same apartment with a European, but he will allow him to attend a school which is taught by a European.

A Hindoo does not lose caste by reading the Bible, or even by being baptized; but he does lose it by eating with a Christian.*

A Hindoo does not lose caste by committing a theft or a forgery; but he loses it by being transported for these crimes, by which he incurs the disgrace of

* Not long ago, in a native school in Ceylon, which took its rise from a secession on account of caste scruples, the seceders adopted the rule of reading the Bible in the school. Strange anomaly, we are apt to say, to admit the Bible into a school founded upon the principle of upholding caste!

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eating with strangers, or of eating food that has been touched by them.

It has been found that the Soodra Christians of the south of India, who adhere to caste, are willing to sit on the same floor in church with Pariahs. But if a mat or carpet covers the floor, it must be cut in two, and some space left between, so that the Soodras may range themselves on one side of the rent, and the Pariahs on the other.

While a Hindoo Shikaree, or huntsman, will carry from the field the game he shoots, he will not carry the smallest article from the bazaar, but must be attended by a Cooly.

In Bengal, the bearer who lights the lamps in your house will not carry a lantern before you at night.

Here also ducks and geese are eaten as food, while fowls are not, the reason for the distinction being far from obvious.*

Such vagaries of sentiment must appear very absurd. They would appear still more so, if we did not find cus-

* See Buchanan's Indian Statistics. Shore mentions a part of India where the people consider it lawful to eat the short-tailed sheep of the hills, but not the long-tailed sheep of the plains. The same author observes that the Rohilla soldiers will submit to be flogged, however severely, with a leather martingale, but will regard it as an unpardonable affront to be touched with a whip or a cane. It is stated in the Life of Bishop Wilson, that Mr. Rudd, of Chinsurah, on one occasion could not find a single boatman willing to take a live turkey down to Calcutta. Dead turkeys they would have taken, but not a live one. This, if correct, must be regarded as one of the most singular caprices of caste.

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toms among ourselves almost equally whimsical, and which prove that in these matters fashion exerts unbounded influence, and tyrannizes over us in the most unaccountable manner.

Caste customs, or peculiarities which are very analogous to those of caste, sometimes arise in a very odd manner. Take the following example :—The little knot called *kutoralee* on the top of the head-dress of the Madras sepoy, is said to have originated in the following manner. At one time certain regiments were transferred from the service of the Nabob of Arcot to that of the East India Company. The soldiers of these regiments, when in the service of the Nabob, used to carry each a small drinking cup wrapped in the turban on the top of the head, and forming a small knot. To conciliate their prejudices, this small knot was copied in the new head-dress which they were required to wear when they became Sepoys of the British army.*

* See General Alexander's evidence given before the parliamentary committee in 1853.

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CHAPTER VI.

Modern System of Indian Caste.—Caste Prejudices.—Food and Meals.

NOTWITHSTANDING the variable and capricious nature of caste to which allusion has been made, it is still possible to discover some general principles, some fixed points, as it were, round which caste prejudices revolve, and which are confined to no particular part of the country, and to no particular class.

Some of the strongest caste prejudices of the Hindoos have reference to the article of food. It was pointed out in a former chapter that much error and misconception prevails in regard to the supposed abstinence of the Hindoos from all kinds of animal food. Still, though what was then said be true, it is beyond doubt that there are certain kinds of animal food to which Hindoos of good caste have a superstitious aversion.

I do not know of any prejudice more common among almost all classes of Hindoos than that entertained against eating beef. Even to look at beef, it is generally allowed, fills them with horror; and in our intercourse with them it sometimes requires a little management to overcome their scruples in this respect.*

* The following anecdote may be quoted in illustration of this point. A European gentleman, in the west of India, formed one

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It is generally believed that respectable Hindoos are averse to sell cows and oxen to Europeans for the purpose of being killed. In certain districts, such as Rajpootanah, where there is little intercourse with Europeans, and where the genuine Hindoo manners remain in great vitality, such notions prevail to a greater extent than in Bengal and other provinces with which the nations of the west have had more intercourse. It is the same in the province of Nagpore. Veneration for the cow or ox seems to be still strong in the interior of the country, far away from European influence. Among the purer tribes of Hindoos, while there is generally no restriction as to the use of venison, the flesh of the goat, and many other kinds of flesh meat, there is a restriction as to beef. In some parts of India, where there are public bazaars for the sale of animal food, the flesh of oxen, cows, and calves is specially excluded. These animals are only killed by low caste Hindoos. The most accurate information I am able to obtain leads to the belief

of a party for a pic-nic in the country. He took with him a round of beef in his palankeen. The bearers, when they made the discovery, refused to move a step. The saheb, finding entreaties and remonstrances of no avail, hit upon the following expedient. He cut off a slice from the round of beef, and ate it in their presence. He then entered the palankeen, and desired the bearers to carry him to the appointed rendezvous, without the round of beef. Struck with the inconsistency, they made no further difficulty, but took up the palankeen, round of beef and all, and proceeded on the journey with great good humour.—See Forbes's Oriental Memoirs.

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that Hindoos generally consider the slaughter of kine as sinful, and the eating of the flesh of these animals as unlawful.*

Notwithstanding this veneration for the cow species, it is the practice in many parts of India to employ oxen to draw hackeries or farm carts. Nothing is more common than to see them used as beasts of burden. In travelling through the country you pass large droves of them laden with corn, salt, cotton, and other commodities. They are constantly to be seen yoked to the plough. Very generally, by the wealthier classes, they are yoked to carriages, as horses are in England.†

Hindoos of good caste also very generally refuse to eat buffaloes' flesh and swine's flesh, which are only eaten by the dregs of the population.‡

* This was observed by our earliest travellers who visited India. Sir T. Roe observes in his Journal that, after leaving Surat, he found the country plentiful, "especially of cattle, the Banians killing none, or selling any to be killed."

† It is said there are particular districts where the purer castes consider it a disgrace to ride in a carriage drawn by oxen. It is also said that husbandmen belonging to the higher castes, who are quite willing to sow and reap and put their hand to almost every kind of agricultural labour, are unwilling to touch the plough on account of the labour required from the ox. This fact is frequently mentioned by Buchanan, who has occasion to notice it again and again in his Indian Statistics.

‡ That the flesh of swine is eaten by the lower castes is quite certain. If there were no other proof, this would suffice. In Bengal and other parts of India, we see great herds of swine, which cannot be kept for pleasure merely, and as pets, without any view to use.

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Most Hindoos of good caste have a very singular antipathy to domestic fowls as an article of diet. They do not rear poultry. For some reason or other they consider them as unclean. Fowls are ranked in the same category with beef and pork, and none but the most degraded castes will eat them. Eggs are also in the list of prohibited articles, which Hindoos of good caste are unwilling to taste.*

Among Hindoos of good caste it is one of the principal rules of purity to abstain from intoxicating liquors. In this respect the Hindoos may be considered among the most temperate people on the face of the earth.

Other manifestations of caste prejudices may be observed in customs which have reference not to the kind of food used, but to the manner of cooking it. The higher castes have very strong prejudices regarding the preparation of their victuals. As a general rule,

* It is not easy to account for this prejudice. It is the more remarkable that fowls thrive well in India, and are so palatable as to be a favourite article of food among the European residents.

It is generally supposed that the prejudices of the Hindoos against eating domestic fowls arises from considerations of cleanliness. They see these birds feeding indiscriminately on insects and reptiles, and this shocks their notions of purity. It is only one of the inconsistencies with which caste abounds, to find that they have no objection to some other animals which are equally open to the charge of eating reptiles and insects.

Buchanan observes that throughout the southern parts of India fowls are a common article of diet among the lower castes, but that in Bengal they are confined to Mussulmans. He states that with Hindoos in Bengal ducks and geese are a common article of food, while fowls are not.

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persons of all ranks must have their food dressed and prepared by one of their own caste.*

If you pass a military station in Bengal, you may see the Sepoys cooking their own food, *each by himself*. Not only so, but in the act of cooking they surround themselves with a small circle of mud, within which no stranger is allowed to enter. After parade they break up into units. Each one surrounds himself with a ring of mud an inch or two in height, within which he places his cooking utensils. There the Sepoy sits and prepares his food alone.†

* It is still a caste prejudice to reject food that has been cooked by other castes. It is found, for example, that most castes refuse to eat bread that has been baked in a common oven.

† It is wonderful to what lengths this feeling is carried. Sir G. Pollock, in his evidence before the Parliamentary Committee in 1853, said—"I have seen a man of the highest caste, on parade perfectly subservient to the man who was commanding him, who was perhaps a Mussulman, and after he leaves the parade that Mussulman does not come near the place where he is feeding: he orders him off, and the man dare not come near him."

Lord Gough stated as follows, in his evidence before the same committee. He said, with reference to the Bengal Sepoys:—"The castes are so various, and in some of the castes the men are so particular, that in going round the hospitals you might see men suffering from thirst, and with their tongues thrust out, while water and everything was in abundance round them, simply from not having men of their own particular caste to give it to them."

Among the Sepoys of the Bengal army there is much caste feeling. A large proportion of the men are Brahmins, Rajpoots, and other high castes. You see each Sepoy cooking his own food apart from the others. He draws a ring round the place where he cooks, within which he entrenches himself, and no one is allowed to enter.

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If a high caste Hindoo will not eat food that has been prepared by another high caste person, it is true, in a still stricter sense, that he will not look at food that has been cooked or touched by any of the lower castes; and the more degraded the caste, the greater his aversion.

This feeling is not confined to the higher ranks. It prevails among the common people also. Among the

The same caste feeling is exhibited in their unwillingness to embark on board ship. They are afraid of losing caste by not having their victuals cooked in the proper manner. In general, in the Bengal army, the Sepoys enlist on the understanding that they are not to be sent across the sea. If they do embark, they will drink no water except what they themselves bring on board. Instances have occurred of a mutiny arising amongst the troops from these causes. In 1825, the 47th Regiment of Native Infantry, at that time stationed at Barrackpore, was ordered to Burmah. The Sepoys were under the impression that they were to be sent by sea. They resisted the order, rose in mutiny, and it was found necessary to fire upon them.

Caste prejudices do not prevail to nearly the same extent among the Sepoys of either the Madras or Bombay army. The Seikh soldiers are also almost wholly free from these prejudices. They do not cook their food each for himself, or fence themselves round with a ring to prevent others from defiling their food. They usually arrange to have one or two men from each company to cook for all.

The Goorkahs are likewise free from the prejudices of caste. They have no such squeamish notions about meats and drinks as prevail among Brahmins and Rajpoots. Sir Charles Napier thus speaks of the Goorkah soldiers. He says: They have no caste, and there is no difficulty about their food. They are short men, "ugly little fellows," with "an enormous expansion of chest." Sir Charles adds that when he obtained an increase of pay for them, their yell of joy was something extraordinary.—See evidence given before the Parliamentary Committee in 1853.

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working classes, such as our domestic servants, each person cooks his own food for himself. Even the prisoners in the public jails have each a daily allowance for purchasing food, which they cook for themselves. Those who have been guilty of the crimes of theft and murder, and whose notions on these subjects are very lax indeed, refuse to eat food that has been cooked by any but themselves.*

Nor is it only in regard to the cooking of food that prejudices prevail. Hindoos of good caste also attach great importance to the point of eating food only with those of their own caste. To sit down to a meal with one of an inferior caste would be considered a disgrace.

Closely connected with this custom is another arising from the same cause. Many Hindoos attach importance to the point of eating their food in privacy. They do not like any one to look on, or to stand near them, while they are at their meals.

These remarks apply in an especial manner to certain sects of Hindoos only. They apply in particular to the Ramanujas, the most striking peculiarity of which sect is the privacy they affect in preparing and eating their meals. It is stated by the highest authority that should the meal, while they are cooking or eating it, attract

* It is scarcely to be supposed that it can be considered so great a pollution for a low caste man to eat food that has been cooked by a high caste man, as it is for the former to eat food that has been prepared by the latter. It is even said that all may eat food that has been cooked by a Brahmin; and that this is the reason that many of the cooks employed in the families of wealthy Soodras are Brahmins.

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the notice of a stranger, "the operation is instantly stopped, and the viands buried in the ground."* A similar fastidiousness as regards food is found among the Rajpoots, and some other Hindoos, though scarcely carried to the same extent.

Nor are these the only prejudices that prevail as regards food, and the pollution contracted by eating it under certain circumstances. There are other prejudices of a similar kind.

In some parts of India, a pure Hindoo considers himself polluted if he uses any plate or bowl of potter's ware more than once. These vessels, of native manufacture, are unglazed. They are soon soiled, and after being once used they are generally thrown away. It may be thought this will prove expensive; but these coarse earthen plates are cheap, and can be replaced at a very moderate cost.

In some parts of India—particularly, I think, in the south—some individuals of the higher castes eat their food from leaves sewed together, and which are thrown away after they have been once used. Many Hindoos, particularly the natives of Upper India, have their food served on brass dishes, which they scour carefully after every meal. They also drink water from brass *lotahs*, or cups. Not unfrequently, the water is poured into the mouth, without suffering the cup to touch the lips.

Nor is this fastidiousness confined to meals, in the strict sense of the word. Among all classes it applies

* See Wilson's Hindoo Sects.

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to smoking as well. Two men of different castes wil not smoke together, any more than eat together.

The same prejudices extend to the preparation and even the cultivation of the betel leaf, a favourite salad of the Hindoos. In many parts of the country, none but the pure castes are allowed to cultivate betel.*

* One or two additional illustrations of the exclusiveness of the Hindoos, in regard to their food, may be given without making too great a demand on the patience of the reader.

Orme, the historian, mentions that when the Fort of Devicottah, in the south of India, was taken in 1749 by Major Lawrence, in one of the chambers a native of high rank was found lying desperately wounded. With sullen obstinacy this man refused every kind of assistance. He was, however, attended to, and his wounds dressed. But he was no sooner left alone, than he tore off the bandages, and attempted to put an end to his life. He afterwards set fire to the house in which he was confined, and was suffocated in the flames. In the words of the historian: "This Indian fell a martyr to his ideas of the impurity he had contracted, by suffering Europeans to administer to his wants."

It has sometimes been observed that a Hindoo soldier, lying wounded on the field of battle, would die rather than accept water from the hands of one who, in his eyes, was an outcast. Colonel Skinner gives a striking instance which came under his own observation, in which a high caste Rajpoot soldier, who was lying wounded and at the point of death, refused to receive either bread or water from the hands of a woman of the Chumar caste. "Why," said he, "having so short a time to live, should he *give up his faith?*" This instance seems to be well authenticated.

Much that Ward states with reference to the prejudices of the Hindoos, in regard to food, is scarcely an exaggeration; at least, as regards some sects of Hindoos. If, says he, a European of the highest rank touch the food of a Hindoo of the lowest caste, the latter will instantly throw it away, although he may not have another morsel to allay the pangs of hunger. There are, undoubtedly, some Hindoos of whom this may be said.

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CHAPTER VII.

Modern System of Indian Caste—Caste Prejudices—Marriage.

ANOTHER central point round which caste prejudices revolve is that of marriage. As a general rule, marriages take place only between members of the same caste. It would appear that in this respect the regulations of the present day are quite as stringent, if not more so, than they were in ancient times.*

It is very generally supposed that in ancient times a Hindoo, in choosing a wife, was restricted by law to persons of the same caste with himself. Menu nowhere lays down so rigid a rule as applicable to all castes. On the contrary, he expressly authorises the Brahmin and the Khetree to select wives from their own and the

* Some writers, however, have gone too far when they observe, as Bernier does, that in India "Nobody marrieth but with those that are of his trade; which is religiously observed, not only among the heathen (the Hindoos), that are obliged to it by their law, but almost always among the Mahomedans themselves."

Some writers of great authority have stated that in the present day the marriage of Brahmins with the lower castes is absolutely illegal. But how are we to reconcile this with the fact that marriages takes place between Koolin Brahmins, and Soodra women?

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two next inferior castes.* The Bhaise was also permitted to choose a wife both from his own caste and from the next inferior one. It was the Soodra alone whose range of selection was limited to his own caste.

It thus appears that, in forming matrimonial alliances, the three higher castes were allowed to extend their view beyond their own tribe. This applied to the men only. It was different with the women, whose privileges were circumscribed within narrower limits. A woman of any of the higher castes was strictly prohibited from forming a matrimonial alliance with a man of an inferior caste to her own. This is a curious feature of Hindoo polity. The man, the higher his caste, had a wider field of selection in choosing a partner; but the higher the woman's caste, the more circumscribed was her choice.†

* As regards the twice-born, there are passages in Menu which admit of even a wider interpretation. Thus it is said, "A believer in Scripture may receive pure knowledge even from a Soodra; a lesson of the highest virtue even from a chandala; and a woman bright as a gem even from the lowest family."

† The most precise rule laid down by Menu on the subject of marriage is the following:—A Soodra woman must only be the wife of a Soodra; she and a Bhaise, of a Bhaise; they two and a Khetree, of a Khetree; those two and a Brahmin, of a Brahmin. In some of the texts a distinction is drawn between the first wife and other wives. It seems to be implied that the different castes should choose the first wife from their own caste, and that more latitude is allowed in subsequent marriages. If the first wife must be of the same caste as the husband, this implies that, in the vast majority of cases, husband and wife must absolutely be of the same caste.

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It is still considered disgraceful for a woman to marry into a caste lower than her own. We hear of cases which come before English judges, where the daughter of a Brahmin has become the wife of a low caste man, and where the father threatens to kill himself if justice be not done, and the culprit who has taken away his daughter severely punished.

In those cases, where a woman marries a man of a higher caste than her own, it would appear that she does not legally occupy so honourable a place in the household as when she is of the same caste with the husband. This was the rule in ancient times, and, if I am not mistaken, it is the rule still. But it would appear to be by no means disgraceful for a Hindoo woman to marry into a higher caste than her own. On the contrary, there are facts which appear to show that it is considered a fit object of ambition to form these alliances, and thus elevate her family in the social scale. Some marriages, such as those of the daughters of wealthy Soodras with Koolin Brahmins, are regulated by this consideration alone. These cases resemble the alliances in our own country between the daughter of a rich commoner and the son of a poor peer. The one brings rank, the other riches; and a fair bargain is struck between them. But the Koolin Brahmin has this advantage over the peer. He is not limited to one choice. He may marry and ennoble as many as he pleases, enriching himself with the accumulated fortunes of many heiresses.

Caste prejudices are stronger on the point of marriage

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than on almost any other. As a barrier between different castes, the prohibition against intermarriage acts with more force and stricter obligation than the prohibition against eating together. It often happens that certain castes will eat with one another, though they will not intermarry.*

* This fact is repeatedly noticed by Buchanan. He repeats again and again that certain castes, or, as he calls them, "tribes" will eat with one another, though they refuse to intermarry. See, in particular, his journey through Mysore and the Carnatic.

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CHAPTER VIII.

Modern System of Indian Caste—Other Caste Prejudices—Social Intercourse—Religious Worship—Dress.

In the present day, the spirit of caste finds one of its chief developments in the refusal of social intercourse between the members of different castes. This antipathy, this refusal to associate with one another, reaches its highest point, and finds its climax, where the one party is of a remarkably pure caste, and the other is a degraded Pariah. It amounts not merely to a disinclination to associate on equal terms, such as we find existing between the different ranks of society among ourselves, but ideas of pollution and personal defilement are associated in the mind of a Hindoo with such intercourse, from which we are happily free.

Some of the more obvious manifestations of this feeling are the following. Two men of different castes will not walk together along the road. They will not sit on the same mat.* They will not live under the same roof. It sometimes happens that they will not even live in the same street. Instances

* To sit on the same mat is only conceded to those of the same caste. The Soodra will not sit on the same mat with the Pariah. So strong is this feeling, that, in some of the Indian languages, *to be of one mat*, signifies to be of the same caste.

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occur in which Brahmins dwell in a certain quarter of the city by themselves, and where a Soodra is not permitted to take up his abode. The Soodras exact the same respect from the Pariahs. In some instances the Pariahs are permitted to dwell only in miserable hovels in the outskirts of the town, and a Brahmin or a Soodra considers himself polluted by passing that way, and breathing the same air.*

The same estrangement and mutual repulsion subsists, also, more or less, between subdivisions of the same caste. Thus the right-hand and left-hand Soodras have no friendly intercourse with one another.

This refusal on the part of the higher castes to associate with the lower, extends even to religion. The Hindoo, like the Pharisee of old, says, *Stand by, I am holier than thou!* Particular castes have, in some instances, their own objects of worship. In some instances, certain castes have their own forms of worship and their own religious festivals; go in pilgimage to their own shrines, and choose exclusively from among themselves their own priests. The disputes, with which we are familiar, which arose between the Soodra Christians and the Pariah Christians of the south of India, is only a fresh development, under new circumstances, of the caste prejudices which prevail among Hindoos generally.

* See Buchanan's journey through Mysore and the Carnatic. Buchanan describes this as quite common throughout the Carnatic, except at Madras, and some other towns under European influence.

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So much is Hindoo caste mixed up with the Hindoo religion, that we cannot always determine which is which; we cannot always determine what is caste and what is sect. In fact, in these later times, the spirit of sect, among large sections of the community, has supplanted the spirit of caste. There are numerous sects who admit proselytes from every caste, but who will accept of no invitations, partake of no food, and form no matrimonial alliances, but with those of their own religious sect. All caste distinctions are merged in those of sect.*

This absorption of caste in sect, is very much concealed from our eyes. We are constantly in danger of confounding the two. What is really a characteristic of sect, is often regarded by Europeans, and by Europeans who have dwelt long in India, as a sign of caste. For example, the painted marks seen on the forehead of many Hindoos are generally supposed to be signs of caste. But they are not so, in the strict sense of the word. They are the outward signs of sect. They indicate the particular religious sect to which those who wear them belong.

In the eyes of the Hindoos, ideas of caste are only to a slight extent associated with dress. I have already had occasion to observe that in past timse

* In one small district of India caste ceases to take effect. This is at the Temple of Juggernath in Orissa. The pilgrims who resort to this celebrated shrine eat food in common, and the rules of caste cease to have any force. I am not sure but this may be regarded as an illustration of the general fact of caste merging in sect.

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extensive changes have taken place in the article of dress; at least among certain classes of Hindoos. On public occasions, the old Hindoo dress is very generally laid aside by men of rank, in favour of the Mahomedan costume.

In the present day, under the British rule, natives of rank are adopting, to some extent, the European style of dress. They do not scruple to wear shoes and stockings, and trousers, all of which are modern innovations. I believe, however, that when they return to their homes, and more particularly when performing religious rites, these novelties are laid aside.*

Nevertheless, though the influence of fashion has in some measure been felt here, we have sufficient proof that both Hindoos and Mahomedans have strong prejudices against any arbitrary change of dress forced upon them by their rulers, and that they connect dress, in some degree, with caste and religion. There seems to be no reason to doubt that the mutiny of Vellore was caused, in part at least, by an injudicious attempt to change the head-dress of the Sepoys.

A very singular instance of the casual connection between caste and dress has lately attracted much attention in England. The Shanars of Tranvancore have in large numbers become converted to Christianity. It would appear that the females of this tribe have from time immemorial been prevented by the other castes

* Buchanan states that when performing religious rites, the orthodox Hindoo must lay aside whatever part of his dress "has been touched by the infidel needle."

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from wearing any garment over their shoulders and breasts. This prohibition seems to have crystallized into a caste custom, and the attempts of the Shanar converts to emancipate themselves from it, were resented by the other tribes as an infringement of the rules of caste. No wonder that the feelings of the women of England were shocked by the existence of such a custom, bearing so oppressively upon their sisters in the east, and which exhibits the prejudices of caste in such an odious light.

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CHAPTER IX.

Modern System of Indian Caste—General Remarks—Caste Prejudices among the lower Castes—Loss of Caste—Restoration to Caste.

It is remarkable that the lower castes are in some respects as tenacious of caste prejudices as the higher tribes. They pride themselves on their own peculiar customs, and observe them with great exactness. We have all heard of the bitter contests between the Right-hand and Left-hand Soodras of the Madras Presidency, and which have been compared in importance to the wars between the Big-endians and Little-endians of Swift's satire. These Right-hand and Left-hand castes comprise each a number of the common trades, among which, according to our ideas, there is no distinction in point of respectability. The former includes barbers, potters, palankeen-bearers, washermen, &c., and the latter, masons, carpenters, blacksmiths, &c. The Right-hand and Left-hand men are each extremely tenacious of their own customs. If the one party presume to trespass upon the privileges of the other, it often gives rise to a quarrel, which rages with

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the utmost fury, and is sometimes the occasion of pitched battles between the contending parties.*

It is found that a common sweeper is frequently as tenacious of the petty customs which belong to his tribe, as Brahmins of the purest descent. Nor do those who are imprisoned for offences against the law, hold less tenaciously by their caste privileges. We hear, every now and then, of the prisoners in the jails obstinately refusing to eat their meals together. Not long ago there was a formidable riot in one of the jails, occasioned, it was said, by an attempt on the part of the authorities to form the prisoners into messes, with one cook to each mess. The convicts obstinately

* Of the Right-hand and Left-hand castes, Buchanan says—"The origin of the division of Hindoos into the right and left hand sides is involved in obscurity. It is said to have taken place at Kunji, or Conjeveram, by order of the goddess Kali; and the rules to be observed by each side were at the same time engraved on a copper plate, which is said to be preserved at the temple of that place. The existence of such a plate, however, is very doubtful; both parties founding on its authority their pretensions, which are diametrically opposite. The different castes of which each division is composed, are not united by any common tie of religion, occupation, or kindred: it seems, therefore, to be merely a struggle for certain honorary distinctions." He adds—"The Right-hand side pretend that they have the exclusive privilege of using twelve pillars in the *pundal* or shed under which their marriage ceremonies are performed; and that their adversaries, in their processions, have no right to ride on horseback, nor to carry a flag painted with the figure of Hanumanta." The Left-hand side, on the contrary, pretend that they are entitled to these privileges, and that they are of the highest rank, having been placed by the goddess Kali on her left hand, "which in India is the place of honour."

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resisted this innovation, and appeared to regard it as
attempt to fix an indelible stain on themselves a
their families.*

The native Soodra Christians of the South of Ind
among whom caste has insinuated itself, or rath
among whom it has never died out, keep aloof fro
Pariah Christians, as persons that perform meni
offices, which are considered degrading. Between the
two parties there is an impassable barrier. T
Soodras refuse to draw water, to eat, drink, or int
marry with the Pariah converts. So far had the feeli
at one time gone, and to such a height had
reached, that instances occurred of Soodra catechis
refusing to live in the same village with Pari
Christians. If a Pariah catechist visited a sick Sood
he was not admitted into the house, but the sick m
was taken out to the verandah. This was done
avoid defilement. To such an extreme were these cas
prejudices carried, that Soodra Christians even refus
to drink out of the same cup at the communion tal
with Pariahs.

It is not easy for a European, even after he h
resided long in India, to understand the various prol
bitions and restrictions of caste. It is not the gu
of the action, as measured by our standard, th

* The prisoners in the Indian jails had formerly a cert
allowance granted to them for purchasing their own food. Th
is not now the case. The change was far from being agreeable
the parties interested. In some cases they rebelled at the risk
their lives, and complained that it was a violation of their caste

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renders a Hindoo liable to lose caste. The penalty incurred is regulated more by an arbitrary ceremonial code than by the immutable laws of morality. The great commandments of the law may be broken one after another with impunity. But the infringement of some trivial custom, which would meet with no check from the public conscience of other nations, at once incurs the penalty. To eat certain kinds of food, to eat food that has been cooked by unclean hands, to eat it in company with one of an inferior caste, these innocent acts are treated as crimes, while an open breach of honesty would be considered venial in comparison.

The following instances may be cited in illustration of the way in which caste may be lost in the present day:—

Some years ago a wealthy native of Bengal was convicted of forgery. As a punishment, the authorities banished him to Sincapore for a certain term of years. When the time had expired he returned home, and was regarded by his countrymen as out of caste. In their opinion he had lost caste, not because he had been guilty of forgery, but because during his banishment he had eaten food which had been cooked by strangers. It was the ceremonial defilement that told against him in the eyes of his countrymen, and not the crime of which he had been guilty, and for which he was punished by the law of the land.

The following story has lately been going the round of the newspapers here. A livery stable keeper of

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Calcutta, enraged at one of his syces for some aggravat
neglect of duty, ordered the sirdar, or head syce of h
establishment, to cut off the culprit's beard. Th
threat was carried into execution, upon which all th
syces of Calcutta, to the number of two or three hun
dred, met in solemn conclave, and resolved to consid
the sirdar as out of caste. They resolved that none
them would associate with him, or obey his orders, unt
he had made reparation.

It would appear from such instances as the foregoin
that certain violations of the recognized rules of decoru
or propriety, as well as matters of ceremonial defil
ment, subject a man to loss of caste.

The situation of the excommunicated person would b
sufficiently terrible, were it not that an easy door i
open to the offender of readmission to his caste. Th
payment of a small fine, with an entertainment to th
leading members of the tribe, usually smooths ove
every difficulty.*

Where the offender is a man of wealth and influence
it is generally understood that he may do almost any

* Acland, in his Letters from India, gives the following no
unapt illustration of the way in which a person, in the presen
day, may lose caste and be again restored to it. The wife of
European, he says, engages an ayah of a Hindoo caste, to whom
it is not permitted to wear petticoats, but only the native dres
The difficulty is got over in this way. The ayah gets four or fiv
rupees. Half of this she gives to the priest. With the othe
half she provides a feast for her tribe. After this she may wea
the petticoats in peace. I would not be understood as vouchin
for the accuracy of every statement in the little book referred t
but the foregoing remarks may be accepted as a general illustra

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thing without forfeiting his caste. An acute observer makes mention of a certain Rajah Mitrajeet, a Brahmin, who married a Mahomedan woman. If any one, says the author from whom we quote, asks why a Brahmin did not lose caste by such an act, the reply is that *a man who has Rajah Mitrajeet's power cannot lose caste.**

Loss of caste implies that the members of the tribe to which the culprit belongs will not eat with him, drink with him, smoke with him, marry with him, or hold any social intercourse with him, that the washerman will not wash for him, or the barber shave him, so long as he remains out of caste. Some authority is of course needed to pronounce and enforce such a penalty, as well as to restore the penitent to his position in society after due reparation has been made. Certain societies or associations exist among the Hindoos, upon whom devolves this duty. These societies have, of course, under our government, no legal jurisdiction. They cannot enforce the penalties they pronounce by the arm of the law. But nevertheless their decision carries with it considerable weight.

In further illustration of this part of the subject, I cannot do better than state briefly the opinions of a highly intelligent writer, who had unusual opportunities for obtaining an accurate insight into the interior organization of Hindoo society.

tion of the facilities afforded, in the present day, for readmission to caste.

* See Buchanan's Notes on Behar.

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Buchanan, in his statistical notes on Bengal, h
the following remarks. The Hindoos of Beng
he says, form themselves into companies called Dol
in order to preserve the purity of their caste. I
Bengal a Hindoo may enter into any Dol he please
and that will admit him; and his rank is partly est
mated by the Dol he belongs to. *There is no necessit
for all the persons being of the same caste.* At th
head of each Dol is a head-man, or chief,* whose dut
it is to punish all transgressions, either by excommuni
cation or fine. The first operation is to turn th
offender out of the company. Then comes the questio
on what terms he can be readmitted. His readmis
sion *is always accompanied by an entertainment to th
company.* The head-man, in passing sentence, i
in general guided by the opinion of the princip
persons of the company. In large places there ar
usually several Dols, who do not always act in har
mony; but, on the contrary, among whom ther
exists considerable jealousy, evinced in ill offices t
one another.†

In his notes on the district of Bhagulpore, the sam
author observes as follows. The purity of caste amon
the high tribes is preserved by assemblies, in whic
all the members are equal. Among the lower tribe

* Called *Dolpoto.*

† We sometimes hear it stated that questions relating to cast
are decided by a Punchayet, consisting of the most influentia
inhabitants of the neighbourhood. These Punchayets ar
probably societies much of the same kind as the Dols describe
by Buchanan.

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there are chiefs called Sirdars or Chowderies. The office is usually hereditary. The people under each chief are called a *chatai*, because they are permitted to sit on the same *mat*, an honour which they forfeit by acting contrary to the rules of caste. The authority of these chiefs is not confined to caste alone. They interfere in matters of worldly interest. No man will enter into an agreement to perform work without the order of his chief, who usually receives a commission on the transaction.

In his statistical account of Mysore and the Carnatic he states that there, as elsewhere, the hereditary head-man of each tribe punishes violations of caste by fines, stripes, or the mulct of an entertainment. He likewise states that in every part of India with which he was acquainted, where there is a considerable number of any one caste, there is a head-man who is generally hereditary, and who decides in cases of dispute, assisted by a council of the most respectable persons of the caste. The punishments he can inflict are fines and stripes, and, above all, loss of caste.*

* In ancient times, in cases of contamination or personal defilement, the precept was, "Wash and be clean." Though bathing, as a means of purification, may not now hold the same high place it once did, it is still resorted to in particular cases.

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CHAPTER X.

Modern System of Indian Caste—Caste Prejudices—Some Changes which have taken place—Losing Ground.

Is caste in the present day losing its hold upon the Hindoo mind, or is it rather growing in influence? This is a question which, in its whole extent, it may not be very easy to answer.

There is no doubt that what many of us understand by Hindoo caste has long ceased to have a distinct existence. We do not, in the present day, find the whole population of India divided into four great castes, standing aloof from one another, and separated by broad lines of demarcation.

In the present day, the restrictions of caste do not prevent the natives from doing what is for their interest or direct advantage, though it is a never-failing excuse for leaving undone what they are disinclined to do. This is another proof, among many, that caste is no longer a living institution *of the same kind* as is set forth in the laws of Menu.

It is frequently said that the Hindoos are accustomed still to regard the laws of Menu as of divine authority, and as the unquestionable rule of conduct in their domestic habits and in the minutest actions of life. In theory this may be true, but not in practice.

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Whatever may have been the case formerly, these immutable laws have in the present day little, if any, living force. It is quite a mistake, for example, to suppose that, in existing circumstances, the caste system of the Hindoos shuts the door to competition, and is an absolute bar to industrial progress. Those who have lived in India, must be aware that Hindoos can be found, in any numbers, willing to perform any kind of work which offers the prospect of adequate remuneration.

Other marked changes have taken place, some of them since the British took possession of the country. The rule that debarred Soodras from learning the Sanscrit language, and which debarred a Brahmin from teaching the Sanscrit language to Soodras, is now a dead letter. When Ward wrote his book, no native, he states, was willing to bind books; no pure Hindoo would handle a book bound in calf-skin; and there was not to be found among the Hindoos of Bengal a single bookseller. A most decided change has taken place in this respect within the last fifty years. Natives may now be found perfectly willing to bind books. There are now in Bengal many Hindoo booksellers, as any one may see at a glance who takes a walk through the Calcutta bazaars; and you may see in the numerous English schools throughout Bengal natives of all classes, from the highest Brahmin to the lowest Soodra, handling books bound in calf without ever dreaming that there is any defilement in it.

Buchanan, in his notes on Dinajpore, mentions it as

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remarkable that the Hindoos there used the skin of th
ox in the form of leather, though contrary to the stri
letter of the law. Nothing is more common in Beng
in the present day, and especially in Calcutta, than f
the middle and higher ranks of natives of all castes t
wear leather shoes made of the skin of the ox.

Within the last year or two it has been found, to th
surprise of many, that all castes are willing to trav
together in railway carriages. At first, it was thought i
would be impossible to get a Brahmin and a Soodra t
sit together in the same carriage. This fallacy has dis
appeared before the light of experience. You may no
every day see Hindoos of all classes streaming into th
same railway carriages, and rubbing shoulders with on
another, without distinction of caste.

Some of the stories current regarding the influenc
at this day of the Brahmins as a caste, are probabl
susceptible of a different explanation. We hear man
anecdotes of their influence, and of the power whic
they still retain over the minds of the people. Tak
the following example:—It happened not long ago, i
the neighbourhood of Calcutta, that a piece of lan
which was mortgaged came into the possession of a
wealthy Soodra in a manner which, though perfectl
legal, could scarcely be considered just or honourable.
There lived in the neighbourhood, as the story goes,
a holy Brahmin of the highest rank, who was induced
to use his influence to get the land restored to the
former owner. He called at the house of the Soodra,
which he had never before done. After some conver-

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sation, the Brahmin introduced the subject which had led him to pay the visit. He expressed a desire that the land should be restored, and his request, it is said, was immediately complied with.

The following is still more characteristic :—At a meeting of missionaries lately held at Calcutta, a missionary from Burdwan related the following anecdote. He stated that, within the last few days, he had seen, in the neighbourhood of Burdwan, a Brahmin, leprous all over, with his foot dipped in a pitcher of water; and while the missionary stood looking on, ten or twelve Hindoos came and drank of the water with a great appearance of devotion.

It is to be observed that the word Brahmin is used by English writers, and sometimes by Hindoos themselves, in an ambiguous sense. We constantly speak of every Hindoo religious teacher, of every devotee, and of every member of a religious order, as a Brahmin, though he may not belong to the Brahminical caste at all. It is impossible to say how many of the anecdotes afloat in the present day regarding Brahminical influence, owe their origin to this ambiguity of the word.

I am strongly inclined to think that, in the cases which have been quoted, the authority exerted may have been owing either to rank and station, irrespective of Brahminical influence in the strict sense of the word, or to reputed sanctity, which in India gives to devotees and ascetics of all castes great power over the minds of the people. The case of a number of Hindoos drinking the water in which a Brahmin had dipped his foot is,

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probably, no more to be regarded as an illustration of the influence of caste than the fact of devout Catholics kissing the Pope's toe is a proof of it. They are both of them illustrations of superstition, and of superstition of a very gross kind, but unconnected with caste in the strict sense of the word.*

It is quite clear from the revelations contained in Sanscrit books of a very early date, that the chain of Hindoo caste as forged by Menu (if, indeed, we are not rather to regard him as the expounder than the framer of the system) had already become loosened in many of its main links.

The Pooranic Shasters represent mankind as at first virtuous and happy, and a gradual deterioration as taking place. In the first age everything went on well. The Brahmins were assiduous in worship, and the Soodras "practised obedience." But in the present evil age all is changed. Deeds of darkness are now general. Purity, truth, virtue and devotion no longer exist. "Brahmins perform the acts of Soodras, and the duties incumbent on each caste are contemned."

The following account of the present age (purporting to be prophetical, but which is doubtless historical) is found in the Vishnoo Pooran. It is said that in this

* We have the high authority of Professor Wilson for stating, that while some Brahmins belong to the orders of Gosains, Vairaghees, and Sunyasees, it is not on account of their Brahminhood, but merely as being Gooroos, or spiritual guides, of the popular sects, that they enjoy any other than secular consideration.

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vile age the observances of caste will be disregarded. A rich man of any caste will espouse maidens of every other. The minds of men "will be wholly occupied in acquiring wealth," and no one will part with ten cowries though entreated by a friend. "Men of all degrees will imagine themselves to be equal with Brahmins." Cows will be held in esteem only as they supply milk. Women will be "fickle, short of stature, gluttonous." They will have many children and little means. Scratching their heads with both hands, they will pay no attention to the commands of their husbands. The narrative proceeds in the following ironical vein. The fruit of prayer and penance practised in the pure age for ten years, is obtained in the Kali age in a day and a night. In this age the Soodras obtain grace more easily than did formerly the twice-born.*

* Not only was the system of caste violated in practice, but in precept also it was boldly arraigned. It is related in the Mahabarat that a certain sage, in answer to a question put to him, replied that he in whom are seen "Truth, liberality, patience, virtue, innocence, devotion, and compassion—he is a Brahmin, according to the religious tradition." He affirms that a Soodra, in whom these virtues are found, is a Brahmin, adding —"Whenever a Soodra has any virtuous characteristic, and a Brahmin lacks it, that Soodra will not be really a Soodra, nor that Brahmin be a Brahmin." His interrogator Nahusha, who had been transformed into a serpent, rejoins: "If you regard him only as a Brahmin whom his conduct makes such, then caste is of no avail until deeds are superadded to it." The sage replies: "O most sapient serpent, the caste of mankind is difficult to determine, owing to the general confusion of classes. Men of all castes are continually begetting children on women

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of all castes. The speech, the mode of propagation, the birth, the death of all men, are alike. Hence those who have insight into reality, consider virtuous character to be the thing mainly to be desired." He then repeats that he is a Brahmin who aims at purity of conduct. We thus see that even in those early times, common sense, in enlightened minds, revolted against the authority of caste.—See Muir's Sanscrit Texts.

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CHAPTER XI.

Modern System of Indian Caste—Its Vitality—Caste Prejudices of Domestic Servants—Caste Prejudices as regards a Sea Voyage.

Let me give a few examples of the vitality of caste prejudices in the present day, confining myself to such instances as force themselves upon the notice of almost every European in India, who pays the slightest attention to what is passing around him.

Caste prejudices flourish with great vigour among our native domestic servants. The prejudices of this class show themselves prominently as regards food. The native servant scrupulously abstains from eating the food which has been served at the table of Europeans. A joint of mutton leaves your table almost untouched, and the servants refuse to eat it, even if invited to do so. They even reject the food which has been cooked for their own countrymen. The following instance, which happened in my own house, may serve as an illustration.

A respectable Mussulman one day sent, with his compliments, a quantity of nicely cooked victuals, consisting of a dish of stewed fowls and rice, two or three

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nicely spiced puddings, and some fruit and sweet-meats. I just tasted one of the dishes. The rest were removed from the table untouched, and the consomar was desired to give them away to the servants. But lo! none of the servants would taste them, with only one exception. The exception was the mehter, or sweeper, a man of the lowest caste, who alone, of all the servants, would allow the food to touch his lips.*

It may be observed, however, that while they will not taste the food that comes from the tables of Europeans, they are not invariably so squeamish with regard to some other articles. It is found, for example, that they are generally willing, when sick, to take medicine from the hand of a European. I have often found palankeen-bearers and domestic servants, when attacked with fever or cholera, willing to take medicine from the hand of their European master. It is found to be the same with Sepoys in the army. This excites surprise in those who are strangers to the country, and who are not aware how capricious and inconsistent a thing caste is.†

* It is the same in other cases. Persons from different districts who are engaged in the same service, and who appear in our eyes to be in every respect on the same footing, do not eat together, or associate with one another. The Patna palankeen-bearers refuse to associate with those from Orissa.

† Mrs. Colin McKenzie gives an instance of disregard to caste, which she witnessed with surprise in a Brahmin Sepoy, who was suffering from sickness. "We gave him," says she,

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Not only do prejudices prevail among our domestic servants with respect to food, and other matters referred to in a former chapter, but a new element introduces itself, of which no notice has yet been taken. Each servant will do only one kind of work, and steadily refuses to go beyond his own narrow routine of duties.

In some parts of the country the prejudices in this respect are more obstinate than in others. Here, in Bengal, the servants are extremely nice and particular. The bearer who dusts the furniture will not sweep the floor, or wait at table. The mehter, who sweeps the floor, will not trim the lamps. The consomar, who waits at table, will not bring water from the well. The syce, who grooms the horse, will not cut the grass to feed it.*

At Madras it is somewhat different. There the petty customs which prevent one servant from doing the work of another, are not quite so rigidly observed. The servant who dusts the furniture will also wait at table. At Bombay, likewise, it is generally said, one servant

"some medicine, which he took without the smallest difficulty out of our spoon, and which was mixed in water from bottles drawn by a Mussulman bheesty in a goat's skin."

* You are sometimes perfectly astonished at the fastidiousness of the servants. You are perhaps feeding a parrot, and a few grains fall on the table. You call the bearer to remove them. He refuses. You order him to do as he is bid. He holds out. You threaten to dismiss him. He submits quietly, and will rather leave your employment than do what he considers is not his proper work.

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will do the work of two or three in Bengal. In Northern India, also, there are fewer scruples among the class of domestic servants than prevail in the ranker soil of Bengal. But in all parts of India these gentry are fastidious on some points; and scruples prevail among them to an extent which excites the astonishment of Europeans.

There are some who go the length of saying that the caste prejudices of domestic servants have been, if not created, at least encouraged and fostered, by Europeans themselves. The large number of servants that we imagine ourselves bound to keep, engenders, it is thought, much of the squeamishness of which we complain. As is the case in large establishments at home, native servants acquire peculiar notions as to their proper functions, and their own specific work. Each is unwilling to step beyond the line which bounds his own narrow sphere of action.*

* It is not unusual for Europeans of high rank in Calcutta, to entertain as many as fifty or sixty servants. Tennant says that for some time after his arrival in India, he lived with a private family, where the servants of all kinds amounted to 105. He thinks they were all necessary, from the fact of their not being willing to do more than one specific kind of work.

Forbes states in his Oriental Memoirs, that while the lower classes of natives generally in the west of India have few prejudices as to what they eat or touch, those of them who are domesticated with Europeans affect to be very scrupulous. At Surat or Bombay, he says, a Hindoo will not remove a dish that has been defiled with beef, or a Mahomedan one that has been defiled with pork, or a Parsee one that has been defiled with hare or rabbit.

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There are other prevailing caste prejudices, of which we hear a good deal in India, and which are confined to no particular class. Among these may be mentioned the common prejudice against undertaking a sea voyage. A Hindoo still subjects himself to the loss of caste by a sea voyage. So far as I can learn, it is not the mere act of crossing the sea that subjects him to the penalty, but because he places himself in a situation in which he is compelled to eat food which has been cooked by those of a different caste. I have known instances of native servants accompanying a sick master or mistress, and obstinately refusing to taste anything during the voyage but dry rice, lest they should be defiled by eating anything cooked in the ship. When Dwarkynath Tagore lately visited England, it was generally said on his return that he was put out of caste. The orthodox among his countrymen excommunicated him, so to speak, and passed a resolution neither to accept his invitations, nor to admit him to their parties, until he had made reparation.*

* The question whether a Hindoo justly forfeits his caste by going to Europe, is keenly debated by the rising generation of Hindoos. Some of my readers may have seen a pamphlet published at Bombay about a year ago by Kursondoss Muljee, giving a narrative of the reception he met with from his countrymen on his return to India after visiting England. It appears that, on his return, many of his own caste held aloof from him and refused to eat with him. Some of his dear countrymen, he states, wished to put him out of caste, simply because he had made a voyage to England, and for no other reason. Those Hindoos who think with Kursondoss that a voyage to Europe ought not, even on Hindoo principles, to subject a man to the loss

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of caste, are not without good reasons for their opinion. They argue with considerable force that Banyans from India travel to Muscat and Zanzibar, and open shops in different parts of Arabia and Africa, without losing caste. On their return to India they are allowed to associate with their caste men without prejudice to their position. During the voyage there and back, it is said they have to sail in a dirty Arab ship, where they cannot have their customary ablutions, and where they are compelled to taste food and water which have been touched by Mahomedans. While residing in these parts their caste customs are frequently violated. They have to drink water, in many cases, brought from the well in leathern bags. And yet, notwithstanding all this, they do not lose caste on their return to India. Why, then, should a voyage to England be visited with such a penalty?

I have lately been favoured with the perusal of a letter from Kursondoss, dated February 1864, addressed to a friend in England. A short extract from it may be of some interest, as tending to throw light on the views respecting caste held by not a few young Hindoos of the present day, especially by those who have received an English education, and have had some intercourse with English society.

"The visit I paid to England has brought me into more difficulties than I anticipated. Only two friends of mine, Mr. Karsandas Madhavdas and another, came forward and had the boldness to receive me as their brother; while all the rest, feeling the galling influence of caste, have remained aloof from me. This, I am sorry to say, has given an encouragement to the enemies of all progress and reform. All those friends who have not yet joined me, have, however, full sympathy with me and the cause. Two years ago I was put to a hard trial you know, and it has pleased Providence to put me to another again this year. You could well imagine the difficulty of my present position when you will know that even domestic servants hesitate to serve me and my family, lest they should be excommunicated. I try to bear this difficulty with patience, and trust in God, who alone is able to get me out of it. . . . . I knew well that I was undergoing a great risk in taking the step, which was against the existing prejudices of my countrymen. I met the risk on my return, but trust God will soon enable me to get out of it. It is

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now for my friends to think whether they should make a bold stand and free themselves from the yoke of caste system, or to yield to its influence. I did what I thought was good, and leave the result with God. I shall very shortly lay before my friends and countrymen an account of my travels, with all the impressions that have been made on my mind during my short stay of five months in England. It is high time for our countrymen to stir and go abroad, and see with their own eyes how far they are left behind the age."

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CHAPTER XII.

Modern System of Indian Caste—Its Growth and Vitality—Caste Prejudices among the Mahomedans of India—Caste Prejudices among native Christians, &c.

NOT only are caste prejudices still maintaining their ground and flourishing in great vigour, but in certain cases, and among certain classes of the population, they appear to be visibly growing and spreading before our eyes.

The Mahomedans of India are deeply imbued with the prejudices of Caste. This is more particularly the case in those districts where they are numerically a small body, and are almost lost in the denser Hindoo population.* It is more the case in Bengal than in the Upper Provinces, at such places as Dacca and Bhagulpore than at Agra and Delhi.

Instead of saying that the Mahomedans of India have imbibed the caste prejudices of the Hindoos,

* In particular localities, where a few scattered Hindoos reside among a large Mahomedan population, the reverse has taken place, and there has been a loosening of the bonds of caste. It is observed, for example, that the Hindoos who dwell in Affghanistan have allowed many of their caste prejudices to slip from them. Thus, they do not object to eat bread that has been baked in a public oven.—See Elphinstone's Caubul.

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perhaps it would be more correct to say that they have never relinquished them. Mahomedan converts from Hindooism, naturally retain many of their old prejudices. Mahomedans in name and religion, they are Hindoos in race, and remain, as before, to a large extent, Hindoos in sentiment and habits.

Those Mahomedans, again, who are born of Hindoo mothers, may be said to drink in caste prejudices with their mother's milk, prejudices which no training in after life can completely eradicate.

But, in addition to all this, even Mahomedans of pure descent necessarily imbibe many of the prejudices of the numerous Hindoo population, by whom they are surrounded. It is merely in the natural course of things that two races which reside side by side for many centuries, should gradually approximate to one another, especially the smaller to the larger population, and that the conquerors should themselves be subdued by the ideas and customs of the people among whom they dwell.

The Mahomedans of India, as a class, refuse to dine with Europeans. A feeling has grown up in this respect, very similar to that of caste, or rather identical with it.*

* Some are of opinion that the disinclination on the part of the Mahomedans of India to dine with Europeans, has grown up only of late years. But the feeling existed in nearly the same degree in early times. It appears from the Journal of Sir T. Roe, who wrote two centuries and a half ago, that even at that time the Mahomedans of India ate by themselves. One of the noblemen of the Mogul's Court (the viceroy of Patan and a Maho-

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Among our domestic servants, those who are Mahomedans are almost as fastidious as those who are Hindoos. In Bengal, the consomar and his assistant, who are generally Mahomedans, will not eat of the food which is served at their master's table. And in regard to work, they are quite as particular, declining to go beyond their appointed duties, with the same punctiliousness as Hindoo servants.

The Hindoos, it is well known, are divided into castes, among whom there is a gradation of rank. Among the Mahomedans there is something similar to it. There are some Mahomedan families who enjoy a higher hereditary rank than others. They form a kind of gentry, who refuse to intermarry with families of lower rank, and who abstain, even in extreme poverty,

medan) invited the English Ambassador to an entertainment. At the collation, consisting of fruit and other delicacies, the viceroy and his company sat apart, "looking on it as a sort of defiling to mix with us. Hereupon I told him he had promised we should eat bread and salt together, and that I had little appetite without his company. He rose presently and sat by me, and we fell heartily to our meal." This, be it observed, was merely the collation. When the supper came in afterwards, two tables were laid as before. "He (the viceroy) desired to be excused himself, because it was their custom to eat among themselves, and his countrymen would take it ill if he did not eat with them." In another part of the Journal it is mentioned that the same nobleman came with his two sons to dine with Sir T. Roe. "He ate some of the banquet provided in my house by a Moorish cook, but would not touch such meat as I had dressed after my own fashion, though his appetite was very good; but he refrained out of a sort of superstition." In another place Sir Thomas observes—"I dined at a table apart, because they make a scruple of eating with us."

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from menial service, and degrading trades. Not only are there particular families who are placed in these circumstances, but there are whole clans, and what, for a better name, we may call castes, among whom there are degrees of dignity and social position.

One of these clans is composed of the Sayuds, or reputed descendants of the prophet.* Next to these may be mentioned the Sheykhs. Those who bear this title claim to be descended from the gentry of Arabia. They are mostly husbandmen, and object to become artizans, or to be engaged in the common trades. The Moguls and Pathans also claim to rank with the gentry of the country.

Under the Mahomedan government, these gentry appear to have enjoyed certain privileges, such as being allowed free pasture for cattle, land for building houses, and even some remission of rent on the land they cultivated.†

* The name Sayud sometimes conveys merely the idea of high rank. Buchanan mentions in his notes on the district of Bhagulpore, that the principal Mahomedan family there, who before their conversion were Brahmins, considered that, on that account, they should rank as Sayuds; and the influence they possessed on the spot secured general acquiescence on the part of the inhabitants.

† Buchanan, in one of his statistical reports says,—"All the high tribes, including Brahmins, Rajpoots, Kaists, Sayuds, Pathans and Moguls, have a right to occupy, without payment, whatever lands they require for their houses and gardens. The same indulgence is granted to men, whether Hindoos or Mahomedans, who are dedicated to the service of religion, such as Sunyasees and Fakeers. It is also usual for these privileged

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I do not say positively that these gradations of ra
are copied from the Hindoos. But there can be lit
doubt, that the feeling which gives rise to them
intensified by associating with Hindoos.

The high caste Hindoos will engage in most kinds
agricultural labour. But they abstain, it is said, fro
ploughing land, on account of the labour it deman
from the ox. In some districts, the higher ranks
Mahomedans follow the example of the Hindoos in th
respect. And very generally the Mahomedans show
respect for Hindoo prejudices by abstaining fro
slaughtering cattle in public.

I have heard it stated that the prejudices of th
Mahomedan in India, against surgery, are eve
stronger than those of the Hindoo, and that, in thi
and in some other respects, he holds the prejudices h
has learnt at second hand, more obstinately than th
race from whom he has copied them.

Nor is it only among the Mahomedans of India tha
caste prejudices appear to be growing and spreading
We see the same thing occurring among other classe
of the population.

It is well known that the Seikhs of the Punjaub
started into a distinct national life with a renunciatio
of caste. But they have not been able to maintai
this position. They have gradually sunk under th
dominion of caste, and in some points of externa

orders, when they rent land, to pay less than farmers of lo
birth. He states that he is not aware whether this distinction i
sanctioned by law, but in practice it is universally admitted.

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observance are more bigoted than those who never raised a protest against Hindooism.*

Not a few religious sects among the Hindoos, who in later times started with denunciations against caste, have after a time, with scarcely a single exception, relapsed, and again allowed caste prejudices to gain an ascendancy over them.

It is a notorious fact that caste prejudices sprang up among the converts to Christianity in the south of India, and flourished, and are still flourishing, with extraordinary vigour, notwithstanding the utmost efforts of the missionaries to root them out. A Soodra Christian, though a beggar, would refuse to eat with a wealthy Pariah, however correct the latter might be in his conduct. He would not sit on the same mat with him in church. He would not even drink wine at the communion table, out of a cup which had been defiled by coming in contact with the lips of a Pariah Christian. It was in vain that the missionaries strove against it. They confessed that caste was too strong for them, and that they were powerless to put it down.

The effect every now and then produced in the Madras Presidency by the admission of Pariahs into missionary schools, is a proof that the spirit of caste is

* Observe, for example, how scrupulous they are in letting the hair grow. Some sects among them will on no account allow the hair to be touched with any cutting instrument. This prejudice amounts to a superstition, and to a caste principle of the truest type.

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still in full activity and in vigorous life.* The infec-
tion has spread to the neighbouring island of Ceylon.
Some time ago a disruption took place, on some ques-
tion of caste, at the missionary school at Jaffna. As I
have heard the circumstances related, a boy of the
fisherman caste was admitted to a school composed
chiefly of the cultivator caste. This gave great offence
to the latter, and they set up a rival school of their
own, where, strange to say, the Bible, with the full
consent of parents and pupils, continued to be daily
read as one of the class books.

Facts like these seem to show that caste lives in
the very air of India, and that it is impossible for the
natives of the country to escape from it or rise
above it.

Particular customs, and sometimes even such as are
founded on the discoveries of science, are apt, in a
country like India, to indurate into caste prejudices.
Of this we have a curious instance in the practice of
inoculation, which has been adopted to some extent
by the natives. Buchanan, whose attention was drawn
to the subject in the course of his Indian researches,
found that in some districts the custom of inoculating
children had become hereditary in particular families,
and was regarded by them as a matter of caste.

* The same prejudice at one time existed in Bengal, where,
however, it appears to have nearly died out. At the Hindoo
College of Calcutta, for many years no pupils were admitted
but Hindoos of good caste. The rule was rigidly enforced, so
long as that institution remained under the exclusive direction of
a native committee.

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There is reason to think that the restrictions of caste are, in some respects, more rigid in modern times than they ever were before. According to Elphinstone, the Brahmins are now more rigidly debarred from the use of animal food, and from marriage with inferior castes, than they were in the age of Menu.

The ancient spirit which denounced severe penalties upon those who forfeited their caste, is not yet dead. We hear of a society in Calcutta at the present moment which appears to take cognizance of questions relating to caste. It was originally instituted with a view to preserve the custom of widow-burning. The members of this society resolved to have no intercourse with those who advocated the abolition of that strange custom. When their efforts proved unavailing in this direction, they appear to have extended their view to the protection of other customs, which were regarded as substantive parts of Hindooism. It has been recently stated in one of the Calcutta newspapers that one of the rules of this society is to the following effect:— "Whoever acts in opposition to the *Subha* is expelled from society and separated from his relations; and the washermen and the barbers are debarred from rendering their services."

Such facts as these have led some to believe that the influence of caste is extending, and that it has of late years been striking its roots more deeply in the hearts of the natives of India. Instead of saying, with some, that caste has in modern times grown into a more stupendous system, or with others, that it is wearing

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out, it would perhaps be more correct to say that it has shifted its ground. Caste is not extinguished, though it has assumed a different shape from what it once had. It sometimes seems to be loosening its hold, while in fact it has only changed its form. Thus the custom of employing Brahmins* as cooks, which at first sight appears to be a violation of caste, is, in another point of view, a homage paid to it. The practice is based upon general consent as to the superior purity of the Brahminical caste. All may lawfully eat food that has been cooked by the pure hands of a Brahmin. The most fastidious may partake of such food without any scruples of conscience.

* If, indeed, we are to understand the word, in this connection, in its caste sense, and not as signifying priest.

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CHAPTER XIII.

Modern System of Indian Caste—Evils of Caste.

Let us now glance at some of the evils of caste. It is a trite observation, that the system of caste lies at the root of some of the most shocking customs of the Hindoos, such as those of widow-burning and infanticide. These are probably its legitimate offspring. But without dwelling on this branch of the subject—which, indeed, has been copiously treated by many eloquent pens—let us pass on to other considerations.

The very object and intent of caste—that without which it can have no life—is to keep up a separation on religious grounds between different tribes and families. Consider the consequences of such a system!

It is not enough to say that it checks the benevolent feelings, and exerts its baleful influence on all those occasions, and in all those circumstances, which naturally give rise to friendly feeling and friendly intercourse. More than this, it produces positive hardness of heart. According to this odious system, to extend kindness and hospitality to one belonging to a different caste, however much he may stand in need of it, instead of being an incumbent duty, is regarded as sinful.

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Such being the case, the fruits of caste are rather illustrated by the conduct of those who passed by on the other side, than by that of the good Samaritan who bound up the stranger's wounds.

Not only are the sympathetic feelings checked, but too surely pride and disdain are planted in their place. The tendency of caste is to elevate one class above another by a kind of divine right, irrespective of character and conduct in practical life. How different is this from the Christian maxim, that all are equal in the sight of God! This wholesome Christian idea raises and gives dignity to the humble, while it abates the pretensions of the proud. The principle of caste has just the opposite effect; and, instead of helping to bridge over, tends to widen the gulf between the different orders of society.

Perhaps the most odious aspect in which caste ever exhibited itself is in its prohibiting—as it did in ancient times—the lower castes from reading the Veds, or even hearing them read. In no respect does it appear in such direct antagonism to the spirit of Christianity; whose Divine Founder came to preach the Gospel to the poor. It is true that the prohibition contained in the ancient code does not literally and in full force apply to the present times. The lowest castes have their own priests, who administer to them the offices and convey to them the consolations of religion. But it is not too much to say that some flavour of the ancient spirit still remains, and embitters the feeling subsisting between different classes of the community.

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Some authors have expressed the opinion that, notwithstanding the burdens imposed upon the Soodras in former days, their condition was, on the whole, preferable to that of slaves under the Roman Empire, and to that of the poor "villains" of the middle ages. It has been observed that the law permitted the former to dwell where they pleased, and to dispose of their property as they pleased. It may be true that, politically, they were nearly on a par with the classes referred to. But we do not find that these were ever subjected to such humiliating restrictions in a religious point of view, as seem in early times to have been imposed on the Soodras, and this single circumstance constitutes a vast difference between them.

And this distinction is not altogether effaced even yet, but still exerts its baneful influence in a more subtle and concealed form. The main practical difference between the higher and lower castes of the present day is, that the former affect a purer life, evinced in greater attention to certain forms. But in the eyes of the Hindoos these forms, these meats and drinks, and diverse washings, constitute the very essence of religion ; and those who, like the lower castes, neglect them, must appear to the others sadly degraded in a spiritual and religious sense.

In the imagination of a devout Hindoo, caste is regarded in the strongest sense as ordained of God. From the Hindoo stand-point it implies not merely a difference of rank or a difference of occupation. More

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than all this, it implies a mystical religious distinction, and has a tendency to foster an odious spiritual pride.*

We may see the true spirit of caste illustrated in such anecdotes as the following.

It is related of the Emperor Akber, that, one day, he requested his minister, Beerbur (a Brahmin), to make him a Hindoo. Beerbur promised to give him a reply early on the following morning. Next morning came, and when the Emperor looked out at the window, he saw a man in one of the tanks in front of the palace, busily engaged in washing an ass. The Emperor called Beerbur and inquired what the man was doing. "He is washing the ass," said Beerbur, "in order to make him a horse." "What a fool he is for his pains!" said the Emperor. Beerbur replied, "You may well say so. And if this man cannot, with all his pains, turn the ass into a horse, how is it possible to turn a Mahomedan into a Hindoo!"

And yet it is possible to exaggerate the evils of Hindoo caste. Let us not credit it with more than it ought to bear. Perhaps the leading idea of Hindoo caste, as understood by most of us, is that the son invariably follows the profession of the father, without the possibility of deviating from it or rising above it.

* In its original shape the influence of caste in fostering spiritual pride in the higher ranks, must have been still greater than it is at present. The Brahmins must have regarded themselves, in the strictest sense, as a peculiar people, elevated immensely above all others by a certain divine right.

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But this is not the case now, whatever it may have been in former times. Caste, as it exists in India in the present day, does not tie men down to one particular occupation or act as an insuperable barrier to rising in the world. Its influence in this respect is now scarcely felt at all.*

The following facts respecting the founder of one of the wealthiest families of Calcutta, show that it is quite possible to emerge from a low condition, and rise in rank *pari passu* with an increase in wealth. Debnarain Deb, the founder of one of the wealthiest and most respectable families in Calcutta, was at first a poor Soodra without any pretensions to rank. From small beginnings he amassed, by patient industry, a large fortune. His next object was to get into society, and for this purpose he was willing to part with some of his wealth. He commenced, it is said, by propitiating the Brahmins. Under their guidance, says the record from which I quote, "his religious expenditure gradually increased, and he is now acknowledged to be one of the most respectable men in the city."

But from the beginning it was not so. There can be no

* It is a prevalent belief that the artificial division of the Hindoos into castes, is an effectual bar to their progress and improvement. To this cause have been assigned the unenterprising character of the Hindoos, and many other defects in their character.

The great evil of caste as a barrier to the progress of society is taken away, when liberty is given for individuals freely to change their occupation in life. This liberty has place in the present day in India, nearly as much as among ourselves.

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doubt that, in its original form, caste, if it had had the power, would have kept men in a stereotyped state, and been a complete barrier to the progress of society.

It has sometimes been said that in a very rude state of society, caste, as implying hereditary trades and professions, is rather favourable than otherwise to progressive improvement. This opinion is held by Dr. Robertson and some other eminent writers.*

I am not disposed to call in question this theory, if we confine our attention only to the earliest stages of improvement. It is undoubtedly true that wherever caste has exercised great influence, as in Egypt and India, a certain manual dexterity has been found co-existing along with it. It appears to be favourable to improvement in the infancy of the arts, and in the first stages of progress. But beyond this point its influence is unfavourable. It confines men's faculties to a narrow routine, and fetters their freer flight. Where its principles are strictly observed, men are deprived of the wholesome influence of competition, and are little better than lifeless machines, without the usual incentives to exertion.

* Elphinstone gives rather an odd instance of its effect in stimulating improvement. He says that, as the Hindoos have castes for all trades, so they have castes for thieves; adding, that the institution, in this instance, is favourable to skill, for the Hindoo thieves *are among the most expert anywhere to be found.*

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CHAPTER XIV.

Modern System of Indian Caste—Caste as an Obstacle to the Progress of Christianity in India.

In no aspect has the question of caste attracted more attention in Europe, than in its bearing upon Christian missions. By many it is regarded as the principal obstacle to be overcome. Many believe that if this grand impediment were removed, the Hindoos would gladly, and in great numbers, embrace the principles of Christianity.

It is an obvious remark that the leading principles of ancient caste are in direct antagonism to the doctrines of Christianity. A system that teaches that the four original castes are sprung from different parts of the Creator's body, and that in consequence there is an inherent difference among them in point of dignity, must, in so far as it is a living belief, be opposed to a religion such as ours, which recognizes no such distinctions, and which plainly teaches that God has made of one flesh all the families of the earth. Again, who can doubt that the pride and exclusiveness fostered by caste are at variance with the benign principles of Chris-

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tianity, and that until the former are rooted out, the latter can make no real progress?

It is an equally obvious remark, that, among the Hindoos, loss of caste involves loss of consideration; that what a Hindoo in these days dreads most by losing caste is that he will forfeit the respect of his countrymen, the respect of the great mass of the community by whom he is surrounded. Let us consider what this involves. It is a sore trial in any country to be obliged to act contrary to the opinions and sentiments of the great mass of the community among whom we dwell. No one is willing to place himself in this position, unless he is either lost to all sense of shame, or, on the other hand, is supported by a clear conscience and a strong sense of duty.

In all these points of view caste must be regarded as a formidable obstacle to the progress of Christianity. But more than all this (and various other considerations might have been added), the system of caste opposes an obstacle to the reception of Christianity, because it is really and truly the Hindoo religion. In the eyes of the natives caste is a sacred thing. It lays hold upon the Hindoo heart with the all-penetrating force of religious belief. It opposes Christianity as a principle which is at deadly feud with itself, which it must either master, or be mastered, and resists its inroads with the fierceness of a man fighting for his life.

We usually think and speak of caste as something distinct from the Hindoo religion; as something sacred, indeed, in the eyes of the Hindoos, but yet having a

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position and sphere of its own apart from religion. We think and speak of it as a stupendous system, which has grown up alongside of the Hindoo religion, but which is no part of it; as a rival and antagonistic system which divides empire with it over the Hindoo mind, but which, however powerful, holds only the second place.

Into this very natural mistake we are led in part by our own experience of what constitutes religion. According to our views, religion consists absolutely of two parts. Speaking generally, it comprehends, in the first place, faith in a Divine Being, who is the maker and ruler of the world, and to whom we are responsible for our conduct. It comprehends, in the second place, a belief in certain great doctrines and moral laws which have been revealed to us by that Divine Being for our good, and which it is of the utmost importance that we should accept as the guide and rule of our conduct. Beyond this, speaking generally, our idea of religion does not extend. According to this view, it has nothing to do with set forms, with what we shall eat or drink, with whom we shall eat or drink, with whom we shall associate, with whom we shall marry, or with innumerable other social arrangements. All these points, according to our notions, are without the sphere of religion, and are purely matters of private arrangement among ourselves, which we may adopt or set aside at our own discretion and as suits our own convenience. When, then, we come in contact with a system which, like Hindoo caste, regulates these minor matters with

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extraordinary minuteness, it is perfectly natural for us to regard this system as something outside and independent of religion.

But with the Hindoos it is quite different. Their idea of religion comprehends something more than belief in a Divine Being, and in certain great doctrines and moral laws, which are under all circumstances good and true, and which all men are bound to obey. In addition to this, it comprehends within itself an elaborate set of rules, which regulate meats and drinks and the whole group of domestic arrangements. In a word, the Hindoo religion is strictly ceremonial, consists mainly, at least in popular estimation, of external observances; and this element not only maintains its ground beside the other two, but overlaps the other two and keeps them out of sight.

This ceremonialism is what we commonly denominate caste. Need we wonder that any attack upon caste is regarded by the natives of India as a blow aimed at the heart of religion itself, and is resisted accordingly?

And yet, though Indian caste resists change with all the force of religion itself, it is possible to exaggerate its influence in this respect. In the past history of India it has not proved of sufficient potency to prevent all religious change. It did not prevent the rise of the Seikh sect, by whom the principles of caste were at the outset repudiated. It has not prevented the rise of numerous other sects among the Hindoos, some of which avowedly renounce caste. It has not prevented

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the propagation of the Mahomedan religion in India. So far from acting wholly as an obstacle to conversion, may not its restrictions, so far as they are oppressively burdensome and opposed to the happiness of society, have a tendency the other way, and drive men into a more liberal system?

It is to be observed that, according to Hindoo notions, a man may read the Bible, and even receive the rite of baptism without forfeiting his caste. A man may be a Christian according to our notions, and still remain a very good Hindoo according to Hindoo notions. How is this? Just because ceremonialism, the system of external observances, occupies so large a space in the Hindoo idea of religion, and so small a space in ours. So long as the Hindoo convert does not partake of food in the company of Christians, or eat cow flesh, or contract personal defilement by violating some of the minute rules of caste, he may still be regarded by his countrymen as a most respectable Hindoo.*

* Among the Christian converts at Cuddalore, about a century ago, was a Pandaram priest. This man, after having embraced the Christian religion, thus speaks out in a letter to his former friends:—"I have changed my religion, but not my caste. By becoming a Christian I did not become an Englishman. I am yet a Tondaman. Never did the priest of this place desire of me anything contrary to my caste. Never did he bid me eat cow flesh; neither have I seen him eat it, or any of the Tamulian Christians, though such a thing be not sinful in itself."—See Reminiscences of the Protestant Mission at Cuddalore.

This Tondaman was a Christian, according to his own more enlightened notions; but from his fastidious observance of the rules of caste, he would still be regarded by his countrymen at large as a respectable Hindoo.

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This may seem to us strange and almost incom prehensible. We are apt to wonder that the idea shoul ever enter into the mind of a Hindoo that it is possibl for any one to become a Christian, and yet retain caste. But let us remember that, according to Hindoo notions, religion consists not so much in the worship of a particular deity, as in the performance of certain ceremonial observances. Caste, in the present day, consists almost wholly in the observance of these ceremonial duties. Hence, in the eyes of a Hindoo, the man who continues to observe the rules of caste is, in a religious point of view, a Hindoo still, though he may have been baptized, and though he may worship in his heart the name of Jesus. To us the rite of baptism is the very confession and adoption of Christianity. But to a Hindoo it appears no more than a name, or, at most, a particular kind of ablution, in perfect harmony with the whole scheme of caste, and which involves no change of religion. What signifies it to him if Jesus or the Virgin Mary have become the object of mental worship? There is ample room for them in the Hindoo pantheon. Their presence is scarcely felt among the "thirty millions" of the gods of India.*

* Caste is a thing entirely ceremonial in its character, and has nothing to do with the object of worship. The profession of Christianity demands scarcely any external observances, and none which are contrary to the rules of caste. We may see from this how it is possible for a Hindoo to embrace Christianity (which is essentially a system of doctrines), and yet in the view of his countrymen be perfectly free from any violation of caste. We may also see how it may appear to the native converts, with more enlightened views as to the essence of religion than their

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It is the opinion of some Europeans, including among them some Christian missionaries, that not a few of those native Christians who adhere to caste are among the most reliable and trustworthy converts. By such men caste seems to be regarded simply as a matter of form, involving no principle, and at variance with no important religious duty. The good Bishop Heber seems to have inclined to this opinion. As the result of careful inquiry, he was led to the belief that caste, among the native converts in India, differed little from the social exclusiveness found among professing Christians.

But surely such views are erroneous and highly dangerous. In the view of the great bulk of Hindoos, caste is the very essence of religion, and no one who retains it, though he were baptized a thousand times over, is considered, with respect to religious belief, as other than a Hindoo.*

It is right to remember that Bishop Heber, when he

countrymen in general, that they may, with perfect consistency, embrace Christianity, and yet retain caste. It may appear to them that the two things do not conflict, are not in antagonism, that they occupy different ground, and do not interfere in the least.

* I do not deny that the individual convert may sometimes be a sincere believer in Christianity, even while retaining the forms of caste. In his inner mind he may adopt our idea of religion, believing that the essential thing is a belief in the true object of worship, while he still conforms to those outward observances which are sacred in the eyes of his countrymen, though of no religious value in his own. But there is great danger in this halting between two opinions.

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expressed the views alluded to, had scarcely made up his mind, and was seeking more light on the subject. Perceiving how the native converts clung to caste, the gentle bishop would naturally incline to a peaceful solution of the difficulty. But if he had lived to prosecute his inquiries further, if he had lived to witness the working of the system in all its deformity, how the Soodra converts refused at the communion service to drink from the same cup with Pariahs, how they refused to sit side by side with Pariahs in the same church, how they refused to have the burial service read over their dead by a Pariah catechist, how a Soodra catechist sometimes refused to live in the same village with Pariahs, we may be sure that his Christian feelings would have revolted against such things, and that he would have been led to the conclusion that the system of caste, of which these were the hideous brood, must be rooted out of the native Christian Church, even though the forms of Christianity should perish with it.*

* It is well known that in Swartz's time, and down to a later period, it was customary for large bodies of native Christians, in the south of India, to refuse to sit on the same side of the church, at the weekly service on Sundays, with converts of an inferior caste. They even refused to be present at the holy communion, unless they received the elements apart from their low caste brethren. For further details of the system, see Kay's Christianity in India, the Life of Bishop Wilson, &c.

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CHAPTER XV.

The British Government and Caste.

THE question has sometimes been asked, whether the British Government in India recognizes caste. There can, I conceive, be no doubt that, at various important epochs in the history of the British empire in India, proclamations were issued by the authorities with a view to conciliate the natives and allay their suspicions, in which voluntary pledges were made to abstain from all interference with their caste and religion.*

Our practice has, as a general rule, conformed to

* See particularly Regulations of 1796 and 1814, and Queen's Proclamation of 1858. Instances might be quoted of a less important character, and applying only to particular localities, but still unmistakably conveying a guarantee not only of protection to property, but of perfect toleration in matters of religion and caste. Take for example the following. When the British authorities took possession of the island of Bombay, they tried to attract native weavers to the spot by holding out promises of protection and toleration. Formal articles were drawn up, and formal stipulations made guaranteeing to the natives who should settle on the island the free exercise of their religion. It was also distinctly stipulated that no European or Mussulman was to live within their private grounds, or to enter them for the purpose of slaughtering animals.—See Anderson's English in Western India.

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these professions. Even in the present day, no wanton attack on the acknowledged customs of the natives would be permitted by the British Government. Nor is there any doubt that the submission of the natives, and their contented acquiescence in our rule, rests very much on a conviction that this is our policy, that we have pledged our word to this effect, and that we will not break faith with them.

At the same time, this recognition of caste is only of a negative kind. We tolerate in the natives the free exercise of their peculiar customs, but we do not enforce obedience to these customs, nor is there any tribunal under our Government invested with authority to take cognizance of such matters.

Nor can it well be otherwise, without leading to much confusion. If the natives were to appeal to the British Government for protection to caste, what would be the result? With every desire on our part to act fairly, the result would necessarily, in many cases, be such as would surprise the natives.

The officers of Government would, in many cases, have to decide in blind ignorance of the real state of the case. They would bring to bear on the subject ideas entirely different from those which occupy the Hindoo mind. The principles of English jurisprudence, applied with the best intentions to regulate Hindoo customs, would frequently confound justice, and lead Hindoos themselves to deprecate such protection. The decisions arrived at would resemble that of the Turkish governor, when invited to arbitrate between

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the Armenian and Greek Churches on the legality of mixing water with the sacramental wine. The rival Churches, unable to settle the point the mselves, appealed to their Mussulman ruler, who pronounced the following luminous judgment.

"Wine is an impure drink, condemned by the Koran; pure water, therefore, only should be used on sacramental occasions."

There is not, in the present day, any definite legal standard of what caste is. We find one thing in books, and another thing in practice. The Hindoos themselves have drifted entirely away from the ordinances of caste, as laid down in their ancient Shasters. These ordinances have been entirely subverted, and scarcely a vestige of them remains that has any living force. If the British judge or magistrate were to act strictly upon the rules of caste as laid down in the Shasters, the Hindoos themselves would be the very first to cry out against it.

It may be said with the strictest truth, that the British Government gives no positive encouragement to caste. In the eye of the law all castes are equal, and the same measure of justice is meted out to the Brahmin, the Soodra, and the Pariah alike. In fact, the British Government may be said to ignore caste, except in so far as it interposes the shield of the law to prevent any violent assault upon it.

Some writers, while admitting that the claims of caste are, as a general rule, ignored by the British Government, appear to think that they are jealously guarded in some particular instances. It is sometimes said

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that in filling up appointments to situations under th
Government, caste is allowed to have weight. I canno
in my own experience recall a single instance in proo
of this. Of the many cases in which I have recom
mended young natives for employment under the
Government, in no case did I ever think it necessary to
specify the caste of the candidate, and in no case did
those who had the patronage at their disposal ever
require such information. In fact, so far as I have
observed, caste is completely ignored both in the civil
and criminal administration of the country. It is an
utter misconception to imagine that, at the present
time, the British Government, in any one respect,
protects and cherishes caste with special favour.*

* I am not aware that any low caste natives, merely on account of their caste, are subjected to civil disabilities. What is sometimes quoted as an exception to this rule, is in fact no exception at all. It is said that Brahmins and Rajpoots have a preferential claim to be enlisted in the Bengal Army, It is true that the Sepoys of this army are most of them high caste men. But this is on account of their supposed superior soldierly qualities, and not in the slightest degree on account of the claims of caste. I have heard that in the south of India certain low caste Christians are not allowed to come near a court of justice, and this merely in consequence of their caste. In the printed reports of the Charter Discussions of 1853 will be found a petition from the Christian inhabitants of Tinnivelly, which states that low caste men (such as barbers and washermen) are not allowed to enter the Cutchery or Magistrates' Court. It is stated that when low caste witnesses are examined, they are obliged to stand at a great distance, and if a high caste man comes near, they must retire to a greater distance. It may be so. But I have never seen anything like it in other parts of India.

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In the History of British India, we have had some warnings of the danger of interfering in an active manner with the caste prejudices of the natives. It is generally admitted that the mutiny of Vellore, which was attended with so much bloodshed, arose in part, if not wholly, from this cause.*

It is difficult to get at the meaning of those who wish Government to suppress caste by forcible means. What can Government do in the matter? Caste exists independent of the Government. It exists in the inner life, like the religious sentiment among ourselves. It is of such a nature that the law cannot touch it, cannot reach it.†

* The recent more extended mutiny of 1857, derived much of its strength from the same cause. If this was not the feeling that animated the leaders of the revolt, it was this that acted upon the more ignorant masses of the Sepoy army. The latter undoubtedly were led to believe that their caste and religion were in danger, and flew to arms.

And yet it may be doubted if the existence of caste is on the whole unfavourable to the permanence of our rule. It may even be considered favourable to it, provided we act with prudence and forbearance. Its spirit is opposed to national union. Perhaps it may be added that caste, in its general spirit and tendency, is likely to impress upon the minds of those who embrace it, contented submission to the state of life in which they are placed.

† To keep aloof from a person can hardly be interpreted as a legal offence. No more can a refusal to dine with him, or to marry into his family. These are points which can hardly come within the cognizance of the law, any more than a breach of etiquette among ourselves.

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CHAPTER XVI.

Modern System of Indian Caste—Caste Prejudices—Analogous Prejudices among ourselves.

It may be observed that institutions and customs very similar to those of Hindoo caste, in its original form, prevailed extensively in several countries of the ancient world; though, so far as historical records show, in none do they appear to have received such complete development as in India.

Nor can it be denied that customs which bear a strong family likeness to those of Indian caste, as seen in the present day, prevail in modern society, and in countries which have reached the highest point of civilization. The germs of caste are implanted in human nature, and the thing itself, more or less fully developed, is to be found everywhere.

There has grown up in many countries an hereditary nobility, a patrician class, the members of which associate very much among themselves. In some countries of Christian Europe it would be considered a sad degradation for a lady of noble birth to ally herself in marriage with a plebeian. If she were to take such a step, she would lose caste among her own class.

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Wherever titled rank is hereditary, this feeling is peculiarly strong. Where every branch of the family is a titled noble, there grows up a feeling which has something of the intensity of Indian caste.*

In countries like modern France, Switzerland, and the United States of America, where there is no titled nobility, society is not less distinctly divided into separate classes, which, in all matters affecting social and domestic intercourse, retain much of the exclusiveness of caste. Each class wraps itself up within itself, draws a ring, as it were, around itself, by which it is protected from the intrusion of strangers. The ground of distinction may be wealth, or official position, or professional status, or something else not so easily defined; but it is there.

It is even found that in these countries, social exclusiveness goes beyond anything to be met with in our own country. The English nobleman can afford to invite a man of the people to his table, without any loss of dignity. A well defined social barrier separates them. But in countries where there is no titled nobility, the higher classes find it necessary to surround themselves with a freezing reserve, so as to ward off undue

* There is, however, this difference. Caste in the eyes of the Hindoos is stamped with a divine sanction. The Christian religion may tolerate, but it does not openly recognize divine ranks. It discourages all immoderate pretensions of the kind. It teaches that God has made all of one blood, and the ideal of Christian duty consists in looking upon one another as brethren. In this respect, as in so many others, our divine religion is directly contrary to the ruder features of caste.

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familiarity. Travellers describe this feeling as pecu-
liarly strong in the United States of America. There
circumstances peculiar to that country, have given ex-
traordinary intensity to the sentiment. Owing to the
thoroughly democratic form of the government, the
higher classes find themselves practically shut out from
their fair share of political power. According to the
testimony of the best informed travellers, they take
refuge in exclusive society, the avenues of which are
barred against all others, and guarded with a vigilance
unknown in the older countries of Europe.

In our own free country, where feudal customs have
been so completely curbed, it is universally acknowledged
that all citizens, as they are equal in the sight of God,
so are they equal in the eye of the law. But in our
social customs and domestic manners, these levelling
principles are not recognized to the same extent as in
religion and in law. The social equality and fraternity
which we sometimes profess in theory, finds nowhere
perfect realization in practice.

If we open our eyes, and look around us, we cannot
but see that a feeling akin to the exclusiveness of caste
runs through our social manners in all ranks of life, in
the middle ranks as much as in the higher, and in the
lower ranks as much as in either. There are what are
called circles of society,—there are coteries, cliques,
and sets, which give and accept invitations to tea-
parties and to social meetings, almost exclusively
among themselves. And I think it may be observed
that, the more a country abounds in wealth, the more

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professions and occupations multiply, the more also this social instinct is developed, which leads men to group themselves in circles dimly outlined and separated from one another by vague notions of rank. Among the mercantile community alone of our great mercantile country, there is an immense number of these social sets, corresponding in a vague manner to the magnitude of the business transactions, the nature of these transactions, the average talent, training, and refinement of the partners, and the degrees of wealth of which they are supposed to be possessed.

Are there not, likewise, in our trades and professions, certain understood rules, which bear no very distant resemblance to caste? Take, for example, the medical profession, or the legal profession. There are certain conventional rules in regard to fees, which cannot be lightly overlooked. Let any one systematically violate them, and the whole fraternity is arrayed against him as one man. If they had the power, they would expel him from their body, and treat him as an outcast. In this case, we call it by the softer name of professional etiquette; but there is something in it that smacks of Hindoo caste.

In like manner, it may be observed that when a person enters any of the recognized professions, he at once steps into the social position of that profession. There is a certain understood status which the usages of society assign to him, and which he enters upon at once.

Those conventional forms and points of etiquette,

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which exist more or less in every country, are, in some of their phases, not unlike the prejudices of caste. These forms, though not without their use, are in some instances so peculiar as to baffle all attempts to trace them to any intelligible principle. It is not easy to justify them on any grounds of reason or common sense. But this does not prevent their being observed with exact propriety, and being regarded with a species of reverence in those places where they happen to be established.

We have our caste prejudices too with respect to food. Imagine what our horror would be at seeing a monkey served at table! And yet monkeys are eaten by some nations. The English have a prejudice against frogs as an article of food, and yet, it is said, our neighbours across the channel have not the same objection to them.*

* Our prejudices in this respect are very strong, and I may be pardoned for giving the following amusing illustration of the tenacity with which they cling to us. In Kaye's Portraits we read as follows:—

"Those attached friends (Drs. Black and Hutton) agreed in their opposition to the usual vulgar prejudices, and frequently discoursed together upon the absurdity of many generally received opinions, especially in regard to diet. On one occasion they had a disquisition upon the inconsistency of abstaining from feeding on the testaceous creatures of the land, while those of the sea were considered as delicacies. Snails, for instance, why not use them as articles of food? They were well known to be nutritious and wholesome—even sanative in some cases. The epicures, in olden times, esteemed as a most delicious treat the snails fed in the marble quarries of Lucca. The Italians still hold them in esteem. The two philosophers, perfectly satisfied that their countrymen were acting most absurdly in not making

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Suppose, again, a person, in our own country, were to associate on intimate terms with scavengers, or with the common hangman, he would inevitably sink in the estimation of the respectable members of society, and would, so to speak, fall from his caste. And yet there would be nothing strictly immoral in associating, for example, with Calcraft. It is only his profession that has a bad name and is surrounded with disagreeable associations.

There is no aspect in which caste presents itself more frequently to the eyes of Europeans in India, none in which it bulks larger than in its manifestations among our native domestic servants. Each servant will perform only one kind of work, and in some cases he will die rather than consent to do what he conceives should be done by another.

snails an ordinary article of food, resolved themselves to make an example; and, accordingly, having procured a number, caused them to be stewed for dinner. No guests were invited to the banquet. The snails were in due season served up; but, alas! great is the difference between theory and practice—so far from exciting the appetite, the smoking dish acted in a diametrically opposite manner, and neither party felt much inclination to partake of its contents; nevertheless, if they looked on the snails with disgust, they retained their awe of each other; so that each, conceiving the symptoms of natural revolt peculiar to himself, began with infinite exertion to swallow, in very small quantities, the mess which he internally loathed. Dr. Black at length broke the ice, but in a delicate manner, as if to sound the opinion of his messmate. 'Doctor,' he said, in his precise and quiet manner, 'Doctor, do you not think that they taste a little—a very little queer?' 'D—— queer! d—— queer, indeed!—take them away, take them away!' vociferated Dr. Hutton, starting up from table, and giving full vent to his feelings of abhorrence."

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Have we nothing like this among ourselves? Is it not the universal custom among domestic servants in all countries to restrict themselves to their own specific work? Truly, in some respects this strange system of caste is only a caricature of our own manners.

But nowhere perhaps does this caste feeling appear stronger than among religious sects, including, it must be confessed, the sects of the Christian Church, both Protestant and Catholic. What we call sectarianism —the spirit of sect in its most bigoted forms—resembles rather the narrowness of Hindooism, than the expansive charity of the Gospel.

Let us look, for example, at the smaller sects. We cannot fail to observe how closely the members of the same sect are knit together, how attached they are to their own forms of worship, and their own views of doctrine, and with what pity they contemplate the errors and blindness of all others. In the eyes of the more ignorant of its own members, each particular sect is alone right, and is invested with a divine authority which pertains to it alone.

But it is not among the smaller sects exclusively that such a feeling exists. We may discover it also in the larger Churches. Some of these have, at different periods, possessed almost unlimited political power, and then might be seen how the spirit of caste could make its power felt. To be excommunicated, to be put out of the Church, was quite as bad as to be put out of caste. The excommunications of the Church of Rome, realize all that we read in ancient Hindoo laws of the dreadful

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punishments reserved for those who violate the rules of caste.*

* The major excommunication of the Church of Rome deprives those against whom it is directed of all participation in the prayers of the Church. Those who incur this penalty are debarred from receiving the sacrament. If an excommunicated person enters a church during divine service, the service must at once cease. Not only so, but he is debarred from all intercourse with others, either in sacred or worldly affairs. And finally, he is deprived of Christian burial, and any cemetery in which he is interred becomes at once polluted.

Not long ago, Dr. St. Leger, the Roman Catholic vicar of Calcutta, was recalled by the General of the Jesuits, for the part he took in connection with the establishment of a school in which, according to the will of the founder, the children of Protestants and Roman Catholics were to be educated together. He was accused of having violated fundamental principles, in *having improperly indulged in social intercourse with the Protestant bishop.* Is not this uncommonly like caste? What is it but caste in its most odious form?

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CHAPTER XVII.

Modern System of Indian Caste—Principle of Caste.

WHAT is it that gives to caste, as it exists in the present day, its binding force upon the minds and consciences of the Hindoos? Something may be due to custom.* But this alone would not be sufficient to account for the tenacity with which the Hindoos cling to caste, and the resentment they feel at any external interference with it. Something may be due to the

* It is extraordinary with what tenacity oriental nations adhere to old customs. There may be observed on sculptured monuments of the earliest times, the same manners and ceremonies which we see still. If the force of custom be great in ordinary matters, it is tenfold greater, and acquires tenfold intensity, in everything associated with religion.

Observe with what reverence the Hindoo lawgiver speaks of immemorial custom. "Immemorial custom is transcendent law, approved in the sacred Scripture, and in the codes of divine legislators. Let every man, therefore, of the three principal classes, who has a due reverence for the Spirit, diligently and constantly observe immemorial custom."

"A man of the priestly, military, or commercial class, who deviates from immemorial usage, tastes not the fruit of the Veds; but, by an exact observance of it, he gathers that fruit in perfection."—See Institutes of Menu.

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fact that the rules of caste, as originally promulgated, were believed to be of divine origin. But we have seen that these rules are no longer observed, that they have undergone so entire a change, that it would be difficult to put the finger on a single particular in which the caste rules of the present day are the same as those of bygone times. We cannot, then, attach much importance to this reason either, or believe that more than a faint gleam of the glory of other days, even in the minds of the most pious Hindoos, is reflected upon the caste system of the present times.*

What is it, then, that gives to caste, in these days in which we live, its binding force upon the consciences of the Hindoos? I have no hesitation in saying it is its connection with religion. The rules of caste which now prevail, are still regarded as of divine origin, as part and parcel of religion. To this idea they owe their binding force and unbounded influence. However much the rules of caste, as laid down in the Shasters, may have been departed from—however much the rules of caste, as observed in the present day, may vary in different localities—however much they may vary among different tribes and societies of men—still each tribe or

* If the system of caste, as described in Menu, and in other Hindoo books held to be of divine origin, had in the present day any living force, there could be no question as to the connection between it and religion in the minds of pious Hindoos. The Institutes of Menu, as is sufficiently well known, are believed by pious Hindoos to be part of their sacred Scriptures. The Jatimala, or modern text-book on caste, is also believed to be of divine authority.

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society believes its own rules are invested with a divine authority.

Nor is it remarkable that this should be the case. Caste, be it remembered, has mainly to do with minute ceremonies and outward observances. The Hindoo religion, as still believed and practised, is mainly ceremonial in its character. Meats and drinks, and diverse washings, days and months, and times and years, form so much of its essence, that caste, the rules of which are directed to the same objects, is inseparably associated in Hindoo minds with religion in its most vital elements.

In religious matters we are extremely apt to attach undue importance to the set forms in which we have been trained. We attach to them not only an undue importance, but a superstitious reverence. The form becomes firmly associated in our minds with the essence of religion. This bigoted attachment to set forms is generally in direct proportion to the ignorance which prevails. Enlightened and well-disciplined minds, can draw a distinction between the essential points of religion and the accidental forms with which it is associated. But such an effort is quite beyond the reach of minds unaccustomed to think. To the ignorant of an ignorant age, attachment to forms becomes a substitute for religion. To the ignorant of an ignorant age, these forms are not only part and parcel of religion, but they are the sum and substance of it.*

* We see the vitality of external forms in the case of fashion and etiquette. The forms of politeness, all forms connected

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What then is caste? We may describe it, in its main element, as something which is indissolubly bound up with the ceremonial feature in the Hindoo religion.*

The ideas of caste and of religion are indissolubly connected in the Hindoo mind. According to our view, religion is a system of doctrines in which ceremonial observances have no share. According to Hindoo notions, religion is a system of ceremonial observances, in which doctrines play only a secondary part. The

with propriety of behaviour, acquire a kind of sacred sanction, and those who neglect them are in danger of losing their place in society. If the tenacity with which external forms maintain their ground be so great when grafted on such a comparatively tame sentiment as mere propriety of behaviour, need we wonder that when they graft themselves on the sentiment of religion (the most powerful and pervading of all our sentiments), they should cling to our nature with such tenacity, and exercise such unbounded influence!

The Jews have remained an unmixed race up to the present day. Their peculiar physiognomy remains the same—the prominent eye, the eagle nose, the heavy lip. To what is this owing? It is probably owing to this, more than to any other human cause, that their religion is to so great a degree ceremonial. The trivial customs connected with meats and drinks are associated in their minds with the very essence of religion, and are fondly cherished as such. Being all external and on the surface, they keep constantly before the eyes of those who practise them the idea that they are a distinct people, differing in the most essential particulars from those who practise them not.

* We may speak of the *castism* of the Hindoo religion, just as we speak of the ceremonialism of the Jewish religion. And as we cannot separate ceremonialism from the Jewish religion, or speak of it as a thing by itself, so neither can we separate castism from the Hindoo religion.

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system of caste takes in the whole, or nearly the whole, ceremonial part of the Hindoo religion. In the estimation of a pious Hindoo, it contains a revelation of the divine will in regard to external observances, which are of vital importance in a religious sense. Viewed in this light, caste is the leading branch, if not the central stem of the Hindoo religion.

If these views be correct, the various Hindoo castes are to be regarded as unions or societies of men formed on religious grounds, the religious grounds being ceremonial in their character, and relating solely or mainly to outward observances. Under this view, the different castes among the Hindoos may be considered as different sects. I am unable to get at any clearer view of them than this, that they are simply sects, distinguished from one another by a diversity in ceremonies, and not by a diversity in doctrines, as among us.

It may still further illustrate this point to observe that new religious sects are ever and anon springing up within the bosom of Hindooism. These sects are, in their origin, in very many instances, composed of members drawn from different castes. It is usual in these cases for the old caste rules to be laid aside. But is caste thereby abolished? By no means. New distinctive customs are adopted, which are the distinguishing external characteristics of the sect, which are associated with the religious belief of the members, and in fact form part and parcel of their creed. It sometimes happens that the new sect ostentatiously renounces caste, is perhaps founded on its explicit renun-

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ciation. But even then, in the climate of India, caste sooner or later springs up anew, and combines again with religion, sharing with it a divided empire, and occupying a common throne.

With these considerations in view, it will no longer appear wonderful that, notwithstanding the changes which have taken place in the customs and rules of caste since early times, the thing itself, under every form, should still be regarded as divine, and should arrogate to itself all the honours due to religion.

Some have compared Hindoo caste to the principle of rank among ourselves; and others have described it as identical with that feeling which leads servants, in all countries, to assert their rights and confine themselves to their own particular duties. But these theories are altogether defective. They leave out the religious element which forms so important a part of the system, and to which, more than anything else, it owes its powerful and mysterious influence.*

* Religion is so associated, in the eyes of the Hindoos, with what is external, that even a change of dress, when not gradual, but appearing to be forced upon them, excites in their minds all the sensitiveness of the sentiment of religion.

The ceremonial and external, the whole field covered by caste, bulks so largely in Hindoo minds as part of religion, that we may say with perfect truth, that a native convert who retains caste is, in the view of his countrymen, no convert at all. He retains, what by Hindoos is considered, the most essential part of Hindooism. A Christian in name, he is a Hindoo in fact. In the eyes of his countrymen, the Hindoo who professes belief in Christianity but retains caste, is still a Hindoo as much as ever. He professes a belief which is unseen, which has few or

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The word caste comprehends two ideas quite distinct from one another. It comprehends, in the first place, the idea of a superstitious reverence for certain customs and outward observances: in the second place, it comprehends the idea of a disposition to unite in certain societies or associations, to which we give the name of castes. In inquiring into the principle of caste, we must bear in mind this distinction.

Caste, in so far as it means a superstitious reverence for certain outward observances, appears to be based mainly upon what we may call the ceremonialism of the Hindoo religion. To this it owes much of its vitality and energy.

no external signs, and retains that system of outward observances which, to the eye of sense, are characteristic of Hindooism.

The position in which a convert places himself who professes the Christian religion, and yet retains Caste, is this. He humours the ideas both of Christians and Hindoos. In the language of our Scriptures, he worships both God and mammon. He is, or endeavours to be, at one and the same time an adherent of both religions. In the eyes of the native public he is an adherent of Hindooism. Both Christians and Hindoos may, with some show of reason, claim him for their own, the former classing him with Christians on account of his professed internal belief, and the latter claiming him for a Hindoo on account of his adherence to the outward characteristics of Hindooism.

It is evident that the position is a dangerous one. It is really a halting between two opinions, or a see-sawing between two religions. It enables a pliable Hindoo to profess Christianity without offending his countrymen, or damaging his secular interests. It is a convenient way of appearing in a double character and enjoying the secular advantages of both religions. What the state of the mind and spirit may be in these circumstances, it would be hard to say.

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Caste, in so far as it implies a disposition to form unions or associations, depends upon what may be called the organizing principle in society. Considered in this light, it is based upon the same disposition and temper of mind which gives rise to ranks and orders in society.

It may be observed that this disposition is inherent in our nature. This being the case, the smallest trifle, the slightest divergence of opinion, is sufficient to form a ground for it. The pabulum is always there, and it only requires the slightest spark to awaken it into activity.*

We may regard Hindoo caste as partly a social and partly a religious institution. In the former aspect it bears a considerable resemblance to rank among ourselves. In the latter, it has the peculiar character and lineaments of a religious sentiment, with its strong impulses, its jealousy of external interference, its self-sacrificing devotion in the cause of duty.

* Such is the tendency in society to form associations, to crystallize into groups, that almost any characteristic that can be claimed in common, is sufficient for the purpose. The fact of being educated at the same school or the same college, knits men together in a bond of brotherhood. At the present moment, those officers of the American army who can lay claim to the honour, pride themselves on being educated at West Point. They talk with respect of those who have been educated there, whatever may be their inherent incapacity, and look down with pity upon all who have not been educated at West Point. We have instances of the same weakness nearer home, if weakness that must be called which is evidently part of our nature, and meant to subserve some wise purpose.

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It may be added that the complex feeling to which we give the name of Caste, is strengthened by the force of custom and antiquity. These invest their objects with a venerable authority to which the minds of all men are inclined to bow, and the Hindoo mind perhaps more than others. We may easily conceive that when these elements, which taken singly are so powerful, are united together, they must form a principle of extraordinary potency, combining the authority of custom with the pride of rank and the enthusiasm of religion.*

In what proportions these elements are combined in Hindoo caste, it may not be very easy to determine. In different individuals, and under different circumstances, they will be found combined in different proportions, resulting, on the whole, in endless diversity. Some think that caste is more a social than a religious distinction. They instance the rise of new castes, and the passing from one caste to another, as inconsistent with the idea of its being mainly a religious principle. But do we not find similar changes among all religious denominations? In fact, there is a constant shifting and displacement going on in the religious world, a

* An English gentleman one day spoke to an intelligent Brahmin on the subject of caste. The Brahmin said, "The English nobility are a privileged class, to whom every honour and deference is paid, as if they were a superior race. What the nobility is to the English people, that is my caste to myself, my family, and my brethren; *and it is much more*."—See Sir Erskine Perry's Evidence before the Parliamentary Committee in 1853.

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hiving off from the parent Church, a splitting into new sects, and Churches, on the most frivolous grounds, which sects and Churches afterwards stand apart from one another like the inhabitants of two different planets, and as if they had no principles in common!

The question may be asked, whether anything can be done by the British Government to hasten the decline and final extinction of caste. I am not sure that the Government can do much in this way. I am quite sure that it can do nothing by direct means, consistently with the principles of religious toleration by which it professes to be guided. But it may do something indirectly.

Among the indirect means of abating the evils of caste, a sound scientific education may be considered the most effectual. It can hardly be supposed that the petty rules of caste should appear otherwise than trivial to those whose minds are enlarged and disciplined by modern science. It is not very safe to predict what will happen in the distant future. But I think we may, with some confidence, look forward to the day when caste, in its harsher features, will give way before the light of education.

At the same time, it would be a mistake to suppose that all enlightened and well educated Hindoos renounce caste. This is far from being the case. They may rise above certain puerilities of the system; but they do not renounce it as a whole. As regards food, considerable relaxations have already taken place among the educated classes. But even when convinced in

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their own minds that some of the restrictions are frivolous, they are, in many instances, prevented from putting their belief into practice by the fear of offending public opinion.*

But here again the remedy is clear. Extend education more widely, bring a greater number under its influence, and by and by the force of public opinion will incline the other way.

As for violent means, they are quite out of place. How impossible would it be to suppress the spirit of sect or of social exclusiveness among ourselves! You may do it by crushing the souls out of men, but in no other way. It was an old belief, that education and persuasion were the best weapons to employ in all such cases. Let us not hastily abandon these wise lessons, taught by experience and the facts of history.

The existence of the British Government in India may be considered as unfavourable to the continuance

* I have heard the following anecdote quoted in illustration of this. In a certain part of India, where it is considered unlawful to eat ducks, there lived an intelligent native, who had received a liberal education, and was emancipated from the prejudices of caste, as regards meats and drinks. This young native fell into a delicate state of health, and the doctor whom he consulted, recommended change of air and a nourishing diet. Accordingly he proceeded to a pleasant residence in the country, taking with him a number of ducks, which he intended to eat one by one, as they were required. Meanwhile they were kept in one of the outhouses. But they kept up such a quacking as to alarm him, and he was obliged to send them away before he was well settled in his new abode, for fear of incurring disgrace in the eyes of his neighbours.

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of caste in its ruder and more demonstrative forms. Under a foreign government which does not sympathize with caste, which never by any chance steps forward to enforce its claims, the system in its more virulent forms must necessarily lose ground. It is quite clear that many of its rules must, under our administration, cease to have any force and become a dead letter.

And yet it may be doubted if the sentiment of caste be not, in some of its phases, fostered by the fact of the rulers of India being foreigners. Though its outward manifestations are discouraged, it may be doubted whether, from this very circumstance, its inner spirit do not derive increased vitality. There is some reason to think that the Hindoos, all the more for being restricted in their political privileges, hedge themselves round with caste prejudices, and entrench themselves within social rules and customs, with which the Government cannot interfere. They thus secure for themselves liberty of action within an inner sphere, and, while politically in subjection, preserve a kind of social independence.

THE END.

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